

THE PSYCHIC FACTOR IN NEUROTIC STYLE

HELEN PALMER

Background

This paper describes the consequences of a series of spontaneous psychic experiences that occurred during a situational life crisis I went through many years ago. The interest of the report is not in the psychological content of the experiences, but in the fact that verifiably psychic impressions appeared during what might have otherwise appeared to be stress-related anxiety attacks. The positive outcome of my crisis was that it awakened an immense curiosity about psychic functioning and prompted me to begin an inner-life practice in an attempt to regain the state of mind that had emerged spontaneously under stress.

My own experiences have convinced me that people are often psychic about the issues that preoccupy their inner attention and form the basis of their neurotic concerns. With this point of view in mind I have, over the last ten years, interviewed many hundreds of highly functioning normal-neurotic individuals about what they pay attention to and, more important, how they pay attention to the critical issues in their lives. The subject pool was drawn from graduate level classes in psychopathology and psychological assessment at John F. Kennedy University, Orinda, California, and students at the Center for The Investigation and Training of Intuition in Berkeley, California.

Experienced self-observers use revealing language when they talk about ways in which they pay attention to loaded personal issues. There are statements like "I merge," or "A part of me gets pulled forward," or "I take their feelings on," or "I see their inner face," or "I detach and watch." Are such statements based purely upon the distortions of psychological projection? Do they stem solely from an inflated desire to believe that we can access special information about the issues of tension in our lives? Are they based upon minimal physical cues, or do these statements stem from a genuine sensitivity to the issues that underlie neurotic style?

I am constantly struck by the fact that my interview subjects are convinced that they have an intuitive insight into the problematic areas of their lives. For example, we could contrast two antipodal neurotic trends such as paranoid and histrionic coping styles. Individuals who identify themselves as paranoid believe that they can detect the "real intentions" of other people; intentions that lie beneath the mask of surface facade. As an antipodal type, self-identified histrionics are convinced that they have the ability to merge with the wishes of others. There are claims of "becoming" what others want and of "intuitively altering in order to please." For the psychically inclined histrionic, such alterations of self-presentation can happen so unconsciously and automatically, that the histrionic loses touch with the sense of a permanent and unchanging self.

It is of course true that paranoids feel safer with an idea of themselves as able to predict and, therefore, ward off potential harm; and that histrionic's needs for attention and approval are supported by the belief that they can assume the characteristics of an ideal mate. Still, I remain impressed that self-reports such as these imply that we are intuitively attuned to the very issues that perpetuate the suffering of particular character types.

Purposes

This paper explores psychic perception as a possible independent factor that co-exists with psychological defense mechanisms in an undetected way. Discussion focuses upon the shifts of attention that underlie projection, the major defense mechanism that perpetuates a paranoid coping style.

The unconscious, defensively organized shifts of attention that underlie projection are contrasted to the possibility of "accurate" shifts that support the paranoid claim of "recognizing" the inner intentions of others. The "accurate" shifts are remarkably similar to particular meditation practices that are organized to enhance the same paranormal abilities to which paranoids feel themselves inclined; namely recognizing the hidden intentions of others and precognitively knowing the future in order to ward off harm.

Indications are given for the application of attention practices in the clinical area. The value to the client is to learn to discriminate between false perceptions stemming from defensive maneuvers and accurate psychic impressions that may co-exist with psychological systems of defense.

Phenomenological Report

I operate from the paranoid perspective. I first encountered the psychic possibilities within my neurotic style during a period of time when I was heavily involved in the political resistance to the Vietnam War. During times of intense concern for the safety of myself and my friends, I would, in a classically paranoid fashion, sit in my room and imagine the possible outcome of our efforts in vivid, highly detailed mental imagery. Over time, and without my realizing that anything unusual was starting to take place, my visual imagination, fueled by apprehension and concern, became powerful enough to cause me to lose awareness of the room in which I sat. For short periods of time I would forget that I was sitting in a living room chair, thinking about the things that might go wrong with a particular political action, and I would become absorbed in a visual reverie that was powerful enough to replace the physical environment.

These visions would appear in front of my open eyes and would play themselves out in the middle of the room. Although they were projected outwardly, I always knew that they originated within myself. Even during moments when the mental imagery was so compelling that I could not retract my attention, I knew that I was not hallucinating. Although I could not stop the intensely focused flow of internal imagery, I still felt that I was watching something happening to me. Watching the visions was much like sitting in a darkened movie theater. Once the action starts on the screen, you cannot turn your attention away. At times you are aware of the space between you and the screen and you know that you are only observing a flow of images; but at other times your attention becomes so immersed in the action that you forget the fact that you are an observer and momentarily feel that the movie drama is happening to you.

I never became so identified with a vision that I lost the sense of an observing self. Later on, when I began a structured visualization practice, I immediately attached great importance to the teachings that describe the observer/object relationship, realizing that, although my mental images could become powerful enough to approximate a scary movie, I could retain awareness that I was observing a vision and would always be able to come back to myself.

My first psychic experiences were so embedded in a paranoid mental style that they went unnoticed. I had fallen into the habit of imagining possible outcomes to political actions and, in retrospect, I realize that I came to conclusions and acted on the information provided by my

visions, while remaining fully convinced that I had thought out the solutions in a reasoned way.

As my imagination became more believable and profound, certain shifts of attention began to take place, not because I was meditating in a conscious way, but because I was in a panic of needing to know the future in order to ward off harm. These shifts of attention bear a remarkable resemblance to those that form the underpinning of specific inner-life practices that are organized to accomplish exactly the task that my paranoia was driving me toward; namely, to access hidden information and to know the outcome of future events. I now realize that what I had thought of and dreaded as panic attacks were precisely what was needed to precipitate me into recognizing the shifts of attention that were necessary to fulfill my psychological need.

The first clearly psychic events were precognitions that appeared during panic attacks of imagining the worst. I would become aware of an unexpected outcome, or occasionally a stranger would appear, interacting with people I already knew. Shortly afterward, the stranger would show up physically. At the moment when a precognitive impression appeared, it seemed no different from the rest of my imaginings. It was always startling to recognize a stranger I had previously seen, because it was only with his or her arrival that I knew that something paranormal had happened.

A second psychic predisposition had probably been developing for a long time before I discovered what I was doing. I gradually realized that under pressure I looked at people's faces for signs of their unspoken intentions and of their hidden points of view. In a classically paranoid fashion, I was scanning the environment for clues to hidden intentions, but my version of looking for hidden intentions consisted of imagining how the expression and emanation of a face would change in response to an internal question of my own. For example, I might be under pressure to decide which of several draft resisters would be the most reliable man for a job. I would imagine the commitment in his face. Did the face seem firm or shaky? Would he show up on the day of an action? Was he really a resister, or an imposter planted by the military police? I had learned to pose very simple questions and to observe how the face would show me its response. A face's features might soften in answer to my mental question or might even alter to express a small sequence of future behavior. I remember once I had to decide between three men for a particular job. One resister's face actually seemed to move backward, while the other two faces literally shone out their commitment to the work.

I saw a lot of what I called emanation, which to me meant that an

inner quality of feeling was being expressed through the face. Once I finally figured out what I was doing, I realized that I quite naturally shifted to the face-gazing device when my suspicions were aroused or when I was pressed into making a decision with insufficient information.

At first the psychic impressions were so indistinguishable from the rest of my thinking that I was unaware of the fact that I made decisions based on that source of information. However, once I caught on to what I was doing, in true paranoid fashion, I never questioned the fact that some of what I saw in the faces was real information. Looking for minimal cues that indicate the inner intentions of others was so systematic in my thinking that I never really doubted that I was seeing something authentic. This aspect of paranoid ideation was actually an advantage because, when a face would change, the alteration and its meaning were simultaneous occurrences in my mind. With a lifetime of habit of reading meaning into small physical cues, an associated meaning was simultaneously stimulated with whatever I would see. I would pose a question to a face and my imagination would alter it in simple ways. It would begin to look sneaky or spacey, or settled or determined and whether I was projecting wildly or was accurate in what I saw, in true paranoid style, I believed that I understood the message that was written on a face.

I became convinced that faces were a source of information. I taught myself to shift my attention from the physically unchanging face that I saw with my physical eyes to the state of mind where the face would alter in response to an inner question. It was a breakthrough for me. Moving my attention back and forth between the "real" face and its imaginative counterpart was an isolated practice that I could try out and then attempt to verify my impressions against the facts. Within a few months after I started working with the face-changing practice, my entire world view had altered. I had found a hypnosis teacher and the panic attacks had almost ceased. As my emotional life became more stable, I also stopped experiencing the spontaneous precognitions that occurred as a result of the extreme focusing of attention brought on by my neurotic concerns.

In retrospect I now believe that I was slowly remembering the practices and finding the people who would help me to gain access to the psychic world. I was drawn to hypnosis, which I found attractive because it was a visual technique; however, in retrospect, what I gained from hypnosis had nothing to do with what I supposed the technique was going to offer.

The hypnotist suggested that the most effective application of the technique would be to learn self-suggestion and to work regularly with

a situation in which I wanted a behavioral change. I chose to work on teaching fright because I had recently taken a teaching position and, during those times when I was involved in an antiwar action, I had a very hard time keeping my panic reaction at bay while I was in the classroom. My real agenda was to learn to hypnotize myself and to somehow learn to tell the difference between when I was projecting and when I was seeing something legitimate through my imagination.

The trance state felt like going home. Within 10 sessions I could hypnotize myself to the point where, as in my panic attacks, I would lose awareness of the room in which I sat even with my eyes open. The hypnosis practice took on a driven quality. I rode visual elevators and escalators down to a small replica of the classroom in which I taught, which became increasingly detailed and clear. I visualized myself as calm and clear minded in the teaching situation, gave myself the suggestion that I would feel composed when I was in class and then returned to myself again. The effects were practical and helpful. The suggestion held while I taught and I felt like my old self, before the panic attacks had begun. However, what was most compelling about hypnosis was the fact that it transported me.

I felt as though I could move into a totally separate world, one that became a source of nourishment. I could not wait to be alone to go down the mental escalators. The self-hypnosis sessions became the high points of the day and I got in as many of them as possible. If I could not find the time to practice, my attention would begin to move toward the trance state, so that I would have to stop what I was doing in order to let myself go back to the classroom inside my mind.

The internal reverie was so pleasurable to me that I simply went with it. It was not the classroom scene, or the fact that I was returning to being a better teacher that was compelling; it was the pleasure of following the images and of letting myself be drawn into the beauty of an inner reverie.

I lost interest in the purposes of hypnosis. Somewhere along the line, the whole procedure of going to the visualized classroom dropped away. I forgot to keep the suggestion going that I would be a relaxed and capable teacher; I felt recovered in that department and, besides, the reveries were so compelling that all I wanted to do was find enough time to go into that world over and over again. There was a span of at least eight months in which I would go down an elevator or an escalator and never know what would appear to me. I never made it to the classroom at the bottom of the last stair because I would be diverted by something much more interesting along the way. There was no vestige of the frightening images that I had once seen, nor did

I feel that I was being guided or taught or that I was approaching some spiritual crossroad. I was simply enjoying the pure pleasure of letting my mind show me things before I knew what I would see.

I fell quite naturally into the state of mind in which I could receive a teaching. When I did my first psychic reading, it did not seem at all unfamiliar or unusual or wonderful. It felt like the obvious next step of a process that had been emerging for years in unrecognized ways. I had joined a psychic development group and what I found there was remarkable in its simplicity. I found a body of traditional visualization practices that implies a solution to the problem of projection. This particular set of practices relies upon the habits of attention that are intrinsic to the paranoid mind. The organization of attention that is required to do these practices well was already so formed in my mental habits that it felt as though I was slipping into that visual world, this time in a highly structured way.

The technique that opened the psychic world to me is a simple, straightforward focusing exercise. It requires strong powers of visual imagination and the ability to immerse one's attention single-pointedly with respect to a visualized representation of objectively real external events. My imagination had certainly been strengthened during the panic attacks and we are all naturally single-pointed when we are afraid. If a lightening bolt strikes, or a lion appears on the road, attention quite naturally becomes single-pointedly focused. In some sense I had been staring at a lion for years, feeling perpetually threatened. I was therefore inclined to the kind of sharp attention that others experience only at times when there is something objective to fear.

My teacher simply said, "See me as a rose," which sounded both absurd, yet at the same time very familiar to me. There was a short internal conflict between wanting to resist and wanting to go with whatever he would tell me to do. The rose appeared externally, just as I had seen the faces change when I looked at them with my eyes open. My teacher's face became a rose-face; I could see his features distinctly, round blue eyes and baby-smooth old face, and at the same time I was seeing a complicated lavender rose that was enmeshed within his features. The rose was a *Sterling Silver*, a hybrid tearose of the kind that grew in our backyard at home. I understood immediately that the face and the rose were somehow identical, that what happened to one happened to the other. In that moment, my *Sterling Silver* and the physical reality of that man's life were the same.

The next instruction was something along the lines of "Take the rose inside." I closed my eyes and internalized the image. Next it was, "Read my rose." I lost myself in the object of my attention, I let the

impressions surface into awareness and then come back to myself and I reported what I had seen. I went home from class with a new mantra: "See the rose, be the rose, what did you see?"

Two years after I saw the rose-face for the first time, I could produce a modest psychic reading at will. By that time I had the rose-face teaching translated into the observer/object relationship that is basic to meditation practice. The rose-face had triggered the realization that objectively real events can be contacted and seen through inner visualization. It had broken my dependence upon projecting a vision externally, where it seemed more "objectively real." I was not interested in face gazing anymore and was never attracted to external focusing devices like tarot cards or yarrow sticks.

I adopted a makeshift version of the observer/object teaching. My goal was to disappear completely into visualized representations of outer events, to learn how to pull through any messages that I might perceive in that state of mind and to then check out my impressions with the facts. The sense of awakened memory continued. I remembered how to stabilize images and how to narrow my attention until the image replaced everything else in the internal space. I remembered how to shift attention back and forth between the awareness that I was separate from the image and allowed my full awareness to be drawn into the beauty of the stationary object in my mind.

When I, as the observer, immersed myself into the visualized object of attention, the image became active. I knew that I had found a voluntary access to the dream mechanism, because when the observer and the image unified, it felt as though I had shifted from controlling an internal image to having a dream about that same image. When the image took off as a dream, it unfolded from a controlled, stationary form into a short sequence of impressions that appeared, as in a dream, without any interference from myself, and that I would understand the moment I began to think again.

It became clear to me that the difference between observing a visualized image that symbolized an outer event and dreaming that same symbol was the difference between a guided image and a psychic vision. The guided image was still directed by my thinking/feeling self, a situation of think-see; whereas the images that had psychic content appeared in a See-Think sequence. The psychic impressions always appeared spontaneously, before I knew what I would see.

I also realized that I had unwittingly negotiated the See-Think shift of attention in the panic attacks that had produced precognitive information. My task was to learn how to replicate that shift without the

support of the single-pointed attentional force that naturally took place when I was terrified.

I also saw that it had been difficult for me to grasp the psychic component in my stress-related experiences because of the bias toward focusing on worst-case scenarios. The observer/object unification that produced a psychic impression therefore tended to take place with worst-case image objects, with no attention paid to best-case possibilities. Any genuine psychic information that I obtained had to be so heavily biased along paranoid lines, that it did not stand out from my usual patterns of thought. According to my interview information, paranoid types tend to view imagining the worst as the touchstone of reality, while imagining the best is thought to be naive make-believe, or unrealistic wishing. As a result of this attentional bias, the psychically inclined paranoid type is likely to develop an unconscious psychic connection to information that perpetuates conflict and suffering without equal access to information that counters the fearful point of view.

I eventually became competent at the Think-See sequence of attention by borrowing freely from the lines of traditional meditation practice and applying what I learned in monastic settings to my own developing needs. I learned how to detach from thoughts and other objects of attention. Most important, I learned how to stabilize an internal image and to tell the difference between times when I was making the image up (Think-See) and times when the image began to turn into a dream (See-Think).

The Attentional Basis of Projection

My biggest psychic concern has always been the question of projection. From the beginning I knew that paranoid imagination and accurate psychic impressions were closely associated perceptions. They were so close that, before I began to work with inner-life practices, I could not tell the difference between projection and a precognition until the latter was physically played out.

The question of source loomed very large in my mind. Was the message contained in a visualization merely a projection, or was the source of the message outside of myself? The difference between a guided image and a psychic vision is subtle work and the question of source came up over and over again for a long period of time. Did I think the image up, or did I see the image before I knew what I would see? The issue was solved only through an immense amount of practice. There were days when I thought I was making the whole thing up,

and other days when I could just sit and practice without getting in my own way.

Projection is so central to the understanding of paranoia that it has almost come to define what is meant by the paranoid tendency. This mental maneuver reduces the tension of having to recognize unacceptable or dangerous tendencies within oneself by attributing those tendencies to the environment and to other people. For example, if a paranoid type begins to "see" or "know" that others are hostile, it is likely that an unacceptable feeling has arisen within the self, which is then attributed to an outside source. Placing the perceived source of threat outside makes the issue more manageable and allows the paranoid to take action in self-defense.

The cognitive shifts that underlie projection as a paranoid defense are relatively easy to examine. For example, a paranoid can be unconsciously angry at another and then begin to focus on the other's faults until those faults begin to shape themselves into threats. These perceived threats then justifiably lead the paranoid to either leave the situation (phobic reaction), or to defend against what has become a clearly threatening possibility (counter-phobic reaction). The counter-phobic strategy allows the original aggression to emerge in a safer posture of self-defense. The cognitive shifts that underlie projection do not necessarily account for the frequent paranoid claim of "seeing" the threat in the external situation, or of "knowing the inner intentions of others," while at the same time suffering no thought impairment or withdrawal of attention from the external environment. David Shapiro comments in *Neurotic Styles* (1965, Basic Books, Inc.):

Projection occurs in the act of cognition with keen attention to the external world. Thus projection is generally faithful to and does not distort apparent reality, nor does it usually include perceptual distortion (hallucinations). Projection distorts the significance of apparent reality; It is an autistic, interpretive distortion of external reality. This is why the subject matter of projection does not usually deal with the apparent and the actual, but with the potential and the hidden, with the intentions of others, their motives, thoughts, feelings and the like. Projection consists of an interpretively biased cognition of actual events or behavior.

The experience of projection is very different than a cognitive explanation would suggest. One can know that one is projecting, yet be unable to change the false perception of the environment. For example, one can be in the shower, with the water sounds cutting off hearing, then hear the phone ringing so loudly and convincingly that it seems

reasonable to turn the water off to check. Projections are overlays upon reality, in which imagination coexists with the physical environment and heightens the look and the sound of reality to such a degree that the distortion is honestly mistaken for the truth.

After years of observing my own mind at work, I still find that, when I am frightened about some issue in my life, I will tend to see the environment as more threatening than usual. The mood of the day feels ominous, the postman's steps sound like bad news coming. Opening the mail entails a slight apprehension because the contents may be critical, although I cannot remember what I might have done. People's negativity seems perilously close to the surface, looking for an excuse to strike. Any available external surface is visually heightened along the lines of hidden tension. People standing in the park appear to be arguing with each other until one walks by and hears them laugh. At a distance they seemed to be locked in a standoff; stiff legged, elbows jutting, heads held at defiant angles. When you hear the laughter the look of their bodies softens and their real intentions are obvious again.

At these times, attention is so outer directed, so focused on looking for some way to account for feeling terrified or angry that, without some training in self-observation, it is extremely unlikely that a paranoid type will remember to look inward to see if the source of such feelings lies within the self.

The paranoid habit is to look outward for explanations of an inner sense of threat. As one might expect, indications will be "found." The clue is "written on their faces," it is "in the tone of the voice." A paranoid's inner hypothesis is confirmed by the finding, or reading in, of clues that verify the idea that the source of tension lies outside of the self.

Conclusions

I suggest that one of the mechanisms of projection is an unrecognized use of the imagination which overlays faces and other objective surfaces. This suggestion is supported by the fact that, in extreme cases of paranoia where visual or auditory hallucinations are present, the shift of attention to imagination can be profound enough to replace the environment altogether. Hallucinations are a prime example of the Think-See sequence, in which the ability to imaginatively heighten external objects of attention is dominated by unresolved subjective conflicts.

I further suggest that, under particular mental conditions, this habitual and unconscious use of the imagination can produce a state of psychic attention in which the inner observer unifies with single-point-

edly focused impressions of situations that are unknown to the thinking/feeling self. Such impressions are most commonly experienced as inner images or voices, but can also appear as a visual overlay upon external surfaces. It is in the state of mind in which observer and image objects unify, that the imagination can become a vehicle of paranormal information.

The mental conditions under which imagination can become a genuine vehicle of paranormal perception are:

1. *Extreme stress*, especially conditions of stress with ambiguous outcomes or where not much information is available, i.e., conditions that produce paranoid tendencies.

2. *Guided imagination*, also called creative reverie, a state of mind in which spontaneous art, innovative inventions and original solutions can appear. Most guided imagination follows a Think-See or a Think-Hear sequence, in which imagination is directed by thought. However, within the creative reverie, attention can shift to See-Think or a Hear-Think sequence, in which case impressions can arise that are truly spontaneous and original.

3. *Psychic states of mind* that can be induced by the unification of the inner observer and an imaginary object of attention.

The spectrum of possible relationships between the inner observer and imagined objects of attention are:

1. *Projections*. In which observer and imaginary objects of attention are not unified, as in hallucinations, night dreams produced from daily residue, daydreams, fantasies and most guided images.

2. *Intuitive Impressions*. In which observer and imaginary objects of attention are unified, insight dreams in which accurate impressions appear that are not known to the thinking/feeling self, insights that come from dreams are highly valued in the practice of psychotherapy, where they are seen as a vehicle of communication between conscious and unconscious functioning, precognitive dreams, guided images that follow the sequence See-Think or Hear-Think, and which convey innovative information, psychic impressions that appear as the result of observer/object unification.

In conclusion I suggest that an analysis of the attentional basis of defense mechanisms, such as projection, will allow us to recognize the occurrence of several aspects of psychic perception that coexist with unconscious defenses. Such an analysis would support the clinical client in the task of observing and detaching from unconscious defenses and would allow the psychically inclined client to recognize ways in which paranormal perceptions may be operating to intensify neurotic concerns.

DISCUSSION

HASTINGS: I do not think I really heard this point made so clearly as you have done it. That is (let me see if I can say it right) that the particular style a perception may have when it is driven by a neurosis may simply call upon psi abilities that just seem like a part of that information gathering style and it takes a bit of inner sorting and outer confirmation to tell what you are doing.

PALMER: Yes. I think it is a very rich source of unrecognized psychic functioning.

HASTINGS: And you would think that other styles like the histrionic and the obsessive might have similar . . .

PALMER: Yes. I have made a study through my students at John F. Kennedy University and through the people who come to training at my institute of very highly functioning people who are consequently quite able to observe their own processes. For example, those that are histrionically inclined are convinced (not always accurately) that they are able to merge themselves with the wishes of others. I have thousands of interviews of people that I am collating along a very simple questionnaire basis, of people who are self-identified as belonging to different neurotic styles. None of these people has had a psychiatric disturbance. I am probably more crazy than any of them and have been closer to the edge of my perceptions than many of my students. But to the histrionic type, just as an antipodal example to the paranoid, you get responses like "Yes, I walk into a room and I say hello to someone. I find myself subtly altering along the lines of how I will get approval from that person."

HASTINGS: How do they know that?

PALMER: How do they know that you know it is accurate? Well, if it is only two percent accurate it is certainly very interesting to investigate, because at that two percent level they are into something that is unconscious, intuitive and buried in their ordinary defenses and has been there since those defenses were erected. There is a lifetime of habit behind it. So I think it is very worthwhile to take seriously the phenomenological report of people when they say something like "I intuitively alter to please." It is not merely neurotic, but it may in fact have a basis of something very authentic in it. If the individual is highly functioning and can observe the difference within himself through learning basic meditation practices and how to tell the difference between shifts of attention that he already goes through, they might be

able to uncover already existing, perhaps very developed patterns of psychic functioning.

HASTINGS: Also, I just want to thank you for so freely telling about your experience.

PALMER: When I first started teaching my colleagues were very concerned about my using myself as a subject. "Nobody is going to study with you, Helen, if they find out that you have hallucinated. They are not going to like that." I have not found that to be the case.

MORRIS: I was very impressed with everything that you have done. I want to echo the notion of appreciating your handling it this way. You used the word *neurotic* to describe yourself and, of course, much of your behavior I suppose could be described that way. But you also were in a very strong need circumstance. Amongst other things you have deliberately chosen to put yourself into a situation with strong needs built into it. You were trying to do something that was very intense and very valuable from various perspectives. It could be argued that had you not adopted some of those mind sets you would have been a little neurotic. If you just sort of sat back and said "Boy, this is terrific. I can hardly wait to meet everyone who comes down the street." Here are the circumstances in which somebody acts with great concern about what people think of them in the environment when, in fact, everything is fine versus the situation where there are real sources of information out there. There probably were quite a few people who did not particularly care for you or your style. Given your personal circumstances, it was very realistic, adaptive and appropriate for you to be very vigilant, psychic or otherwise. Had you denied the need for vigilance, you could easily have been regarded as neurotic.

PALMER: I would even argue it in another way. To me the attraction of the political movement was humanitarian at that time. But I was also attracted to it because it was exciting, because it had paranoid-making content. You know, a lot of my good friends in graduate school did not know there was a war on. I thought I was at war. There is an attraction to it, but I am also attracted to rigorous techniques in meditation, where you go to the edge. I am attracted to that as a style. What I am trying to do is to build a case that there are different styles that have different attraction points in meditation. Different meditations are more useful for different kinds of people. So I do not mind the word neurotic really. I also feel this sense of awakened memory. I do not really know how to categorize that, but it was such a powerful thing in me that it somehow was also familiar, almost as though I was just walking through the motions of something that I had done before. I occasionally run into this statement with other people. They engineer

situations that will allow this memory to come forward and I think some of that was at work. I was attracted to the situation that would precipitate the opening.

MORRIS: That fits in with the concept of those factors that I presented earlier.

PALMER: Yes, it does. It does fit very well with your theory.

ISAACS: I was very fascinated with your paper to the point where speaking frankly as one paranoid to another I was very . . .

PALMER: I think you are more narcissistic actually.

ISAACS: Do you think I am? I think I'm more a paranoid type.

PALMER: There is an underlying core of paranoia, but it has a very fascinating style if you would like to discuss it.

ISAACS: Rhea White did an analysis of the means by which the old time psychics got their impressions. A comparison between the old techniques and the new card-calling techniques came up with an almost identical description of what you are calling the paranoid style, in terms of people having a single stable object such as a rose that they saw, which was then followed by their psychic impressions. If you look at Eileen Garrett's work and Larry LeShan's abstraction of that, it looks much more like the histrionic style where there is a merging with the events. I wondered if you could give us a more detailed description of the histrionic style or the kind of induction process in the same way that you have done for the paranoid.

PALMER: Well I could describe it from the point of view of attention practice. Paranoid attention is one way of getting a psychic impression, an impression of something you do not know about in your own mind. In the paranoid style you use a stable visualization object. You see the object. You are aware. You see there is a discrepancy between the awareness of the observer and the object. You become one and the impression flows spontaneously from that trajectory of your attention. The histrionic is much more inclined to a feeling state. They are not very mind-based. They are more emotionally based so you have a whole different worldview and a whole different kind of history. You get a history with a histrionic and, incidently, with the dependent type that is actually parallel to the active repression, forgetting themselves. An example would be the young child. The histrionic or the potential histrionic comes home from school full of his or her own project, full of his or her own life and realizes "If I walk in here with my agenda and my position in mind and I speak about it I will be rejected. Nobody will be interested. I do not like that. So what I will do is forget my own agenda or my own perspective which is emptying." It is also repression, but from an intentional point of view you are not interested in repressed

content you are more interested in the fact that one forgets oneself. And then the attention is focused on another person and the histrionic would feel him or herself altering slightly.

In other words, an aspect of himself that is most appropriate for this individual to gain attention and approval comes forward. Now on a mechanical level that does not sound very intuitive. It is like "Daddy likes me when I am a certain way, so I will forget myself and alter into a mood and a presentation and surface that appeals to him, so I will be that way and he is going to like me." So it starts out like that, not being able to be yourself, having to forget yourself, having to pay very close attention to another and turns into an internal question of "How am I similar to this other person? How am I like the other person?" It is a feeling-based intuition. Then you can generalize. You have several different people who love you because you have altered yourself in conformity with what they approve of. It starts out mechanically. Through learning and habit it becomes a kind of ability where you can walk into a room full of strangers and you can sense where the approval is going to come from. You put your attention on somebody, but it does not hit. All of a sudden it hits, "That person is going to like me" and you find yourself altering into an aspect of yourself. It is not an alien aspect. It is one of many aspects of yourself that would be approved of. You meet the person. You shake hands. Now, whether it was necessary to do so, whether they would have liked you as your real self or you had to alter none of that is the issue. The fact is that you just do this habitually all the time. So within that habit there are going to be misses and hits. The psychic task is for the individual who has this varied and potential ability, to be able to go into him or herself, empty his or her attention and be able to discriminate. Did I just do it automatically or did I do it because this person reminded me of something that I did because I was lonely? What was the motive behind it? A good self-observer can observe those things. I do not have that talent, I had to learn how to do it. I did not have it by history or training, but somebody who is really interested in developing it would be able to recognize it. I am deliberately going to go empty. I am not repressing. I am not deliberately forgetting. I am just practicing how to empty my mind. You replicate through practice. Now I am going to put my attention on another person and I am going to observe how my attention has to focus. How intense does it have to be? Is it lightweight? Does it have to match the other person? What happens to my gaze and focus relative to the person I am trying to please and how do I recognize the shift in myself? And how do I know the difference between a genuine outcome and a habit? So that is a training strategy.

ISAACS: Is this ESP people-centered as opposed to object centered?

PALMER: I do not know. That is your department.

KEIL: I appreciated your extension of psi experiences to a wider field, but I just wondered how far what you called your veridical psychic experience should really be labeled what Dr. Neppe called subjective paranormal experience?

PALMER: I do not know. We would have to apply the scale to my situation, see where I sit on the scale.

KEIL: Ultimately we do not really know whether it is a psychic experience. It may very well be, but when you call it veridical I would feel that it is going a little bit too far, really.

PALMER: I started out with a very simple face-gazing exercise to see if I was projecting or whether I wasn't. Then I moved into spiritual practice and since 1972 I have been a psychic reader. I have done thousands of sessions for people along these lines, so I would have to say it has a repeating aspect to it. What started out as a spontaneous experience became something that was repeatable for me through my practices. I do not know if that answers your question.

HARARY: Helen, I think what you are saying is really important. I will refer back to Freud. He looked at the way that people have apparent psi experiences, how that functions within their psychological frame of reference and why you particularly might focus on a particular kind of information. You are doing that rather than saying how did this strange thing happen to this person and let's try to figure out if they are okay or not okay based upon this unusual thing that happened. You are going much deeper than that and saying that this kind of thing probably occurs, now let's try to figure out what its role is in the psyche. To me that is a very integrated kind of clinical approach—to ask what is the purpose here, what is going on?

PALMER: The purpose is survival, at least in my case and in many of my students. Attention is focused on a narrow section of concern, for example the histrionic need for interest and approval, the paranoid need to ward off harm. There are eight or nine diagnostic categories for each, but because we are focused on a very narrow slice of reality we may be flagrantly psychic within that narrow realm of concern. Because we can not see the 360 degree total reality it washes out. We do not even know that we are into something. The importance of the practice is being able to discriminate between the histrionic who alters in a psychic way to please, and one who just does it by habit as a non-psychic maneuver. Both of them probably would see it as a burden, not as a blessing. Neither of them would probably know that they were doing anything unusual. It would have to be pointed out to them. Now,

the importance of the practice is that once you learn how to get an entrance and you can convince your thinking mind that your access is clear, then you can broaden the question immensely. So when I am doing sessions for people I am not interested particularly in their paranoid issues. I am not only trouble shooting or looking for what might go wrong with the picture. But once you get access to the world through these discrimination practices of being able to tell the difference between projection and real impressions, the whole world opens. You are not just getting to be a better paranoid predictor in harmful events or a better histrionic people pleaser.

HARARY: I think you are asking the right questions and I really applaud that.

NEPPE: I was just going to ask about the wonderful term we all use and sometimes use as a euphemism possibly for psi experience or some other kind of delta and that is the term "intuition". It seems that intuition has a lot to do with what you are talking about. With no differentiation of sex people tend to still talk about feminine intuition. Do you think that this attempt to try to discriminate the real from the unreal is in some way related to the so-called phenomenon of intuition, what ever it means?

PALMER: Oh yes. I definitely do. In the popular mind psychic is just a street word for intuition. It is more popular and, therefore, because it has been so over-used it is a less high falutin' way of describing one's non-linear perceptions. In the body of a paper like this you could cross out psychic and write in intuitive and it would fit just as well.

NEPPE: That was the easy question. Here comes the more difficult one. You have outlined styles of behavior. Do you think that one can with a majority of the population delineate out particular styles or are most people far more complicated with several different styles or no styles at all?

PALMER: The more flagrant of the symptoms and the least flagrant of the symptoms, are the two ends of the spectrum and are the easiest to work with. It is the mid-range where you have a poor self-observation, inexperienced self-observation, unwillingness to self-observe; that is where the difficulty comes, I feel. When the machine is really broken down it is a lot easier to see the difference between the paranoid and the histrionic. When you get up into the neurotic end it is a little harder in the middle to diagnose. Yes, I do think people break down into object relations, that we are focused on very different objects of interest. That stems from childhood. I think that if you follow the object relations theory, which is relatively new, it will shed a great deal of light and make our diagnostic task a lot easier. In terms of meditation object

relations is a very hot area because you are observing objects you see in order to practice and develop your awareness of very subtle objects. At the very high end where you get experienced self-observers is the group I am used to working with, meditators and people who are working on themselves. They are pretty easy to recognize. They can self-recognize themselves. At the low end where it is broken down it is easy. I think in the middle you have a little more trouble. There you need a clinician, somebody to assist and perform the witnessing or the observing function.

HEINZE: Well I want to congratulate you first of all for reporting so freely. It is exactly the research we need in observing the process. I wish you would write about it because you have collected so many cases already, just observing the process and seeing what you can filter out from that. So I congratulate you for starting that.

HARARY: Don't you have a book coming out?

PALMER: Yes, I have a book at Harper & Row.

KRIPPNER: What will be the name of it?

PALMER: The book is actually about an ancient diagnostic system, a nine point-system called the Enneagram. It deals with some of the material of the internal attentional style that is specific to the nine different types. The Enneagram is interesting because it maps almost on a one-to-one basis the current psychological *DSM-III-R* diagnostic categories. So it is very impressive from that point of view that it is an ancient system, but it has a modern application.