

## MEANING, METANOIA AND PSI

RHEA A. WHITE

Thank God our time is now when wrong  
Comes up to face us everywhere,  
Never to leave us til we take  
The longest stride of soul men ever took.  
Affairs are now soul size  
The enterprise  
Is exploration into God.  
Where are you making for?

—Christopher Fry

Today I would like to speculate—not on how parapsychology relates to religion *now*, or how it did in the past, as, say, in the lives of the saints—but on how a future parapsychology might serve as a living laboratory for investigating and more fully understanding religious truths.

An important step in doing so was taken in 1974 when Rex Stanford presented his model of psi-mediated instrumental response (PMIR) to account for spontaneous psi events. Such events, he noted, are non-intentional, i.e., they occur without the conscious intention of the per-cipient, yet they also seem “to function in the service of personal needs” (Stanford, 1974, p. 34). The evidence upon which his model is based comes primarily from nonintentional ESP experiments in which the subject is not even aware that he or she is taking an ESP test, yet still is able to demonstrate ESP in the testing situation. Stanford says: “*PMIR can (but need not always) occur: (a) without a conscious effort to use psi; (b) without a conscious effort to fulfill the need subserved by PMIR; (c) without prior sensory knowledge even of the existence of the need-relevant circumstance; (d) without the development of conscious perceptions (e.g., mental images) or ideas concerning the need-relevant circumstance; and (e) without awareness that anything extraordinary is happening*” (Stanford, 1974, p. 45).

Although PMIR is often manifested by such mechanisms as forgetting or remembering, associations and even by means of errors, Stan-

ford points out that there also are "conscious psi-mediated cognitions and/or perceptions" (p. 48). Instances of the latter would be typical of spontaneous cases of ESP. However, he suggests that a "perception (in the waking state) of the need-relevant object or event is unlikely when PMIR can be accomplished in some simpler, less disruptive way" (Stanford, 1974, p. 49).

Stanford sets forth nine assumptions concerning PMIR, some with subcategories, the most relevant to my argument being what he calls the "unconscious timing mechanism," which ". . . allows one unexpectedly to be at the appropriate place at the appropriate time to encounter a favorable event or to avoid an unfavorable one; or causes one to perform a preplanned action (or action sequence) at a time when the act has definite, logically unforeseen, favorable consequences" (Stanford, 1974, p. 47).

Stanford uses the term "psi guidance" for the mechanism that determines which course of action one follows. I would like to speculate further on the nature of "psi guidance." It appears to me that Stanford's set of brilliant propositions is a secular model of what, in a more avowedly religious era, would be called the grace of God. A common religious assumption is that God knows or divines our needs before even we ourselves are aware of them and sets into motion the means of answering them, unbeknownst to us. It has always seemed to me that when psi occurs, it could be viewed as a kind of divine response to personal needs, but if our needs are being answered all of the time via the mechanism of psi, even when we cannot perceive it, then why is psi so sporadic? Stanford's PMIR model provides an answer. The typical ESP case may be at the extreme visible end of an otherwise invisible continuum. Blatant or obvious psi would then be the exception, not the rule, and so it is with Stanford's PMIR. This may also explain why parapsychology has not advanced beyond a certain point in its century-long existence: We have concentrated most of our efforts on trying to understand the exception, not the rule. The rule would be that psi is need-determined and works in the most economical and unobtrusive manner possible. Whether or not it is consciously mediated, as in the typical spontaneous case, is beside the point.

What this boils down to is that psi can be mobilized in response to needs and can provide solutions to problems either very difficult or even impossible to answer in other ways, if possible in the guise of "normal" functions. G. F. Dalton, in a provocative paper written over 30 years ago entitled "The Solution of Problems in Dreams" (Dalton, 1952), cites many instances of PMIR. These cases could also be called answers to prayer.

Psi does not appear to come into play to answer needs that are within a person's power to answer by normal means, whether through the use of the senses, say, by using the telephone or by finding an answer in a textbook, or by the conscious use of rational inference. It appears to work best when we are at the edge of the unknown with insufficient sensory and rational means at our disposal to progress any further without the aid of something else, something more. Having done our best and yet fallen short, something else takes over, or, as the saying goes, "God helps those who help themselves." William James posited a "germinal higher part" of human beings which he characterized as the "more" that may be contacted not only in times of need, but that can become the center of our lives. James says it is possible to become "*conscious that this higher part is conterminous and continuous with a MORE of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside. . . , and which . . . [one] can keep in working touch with*" (James, 1902, pp. 498-499). This MORE is within us; it is "*a wider self through which saving experiences come*" (p. 505).

"More" also is a term associated with growth—with the expansion of boundaries beyond those previously conceived possible. It is our job as humans to conceive—to conceptualize—to envision that which *could* be possible. Our reach should always exceed our grasp, yes, but that grasp can be enlarged and extended, not only in individual lives but generation after generation. PMIR, then, may be the instrument which can bring new conceptions to fruition.

There are many occasions in the settings of many professions and in other contexts where this situation obtains. It certainly obtains in the sciences, and also in the religious disciplines and in the arts, in psychotherapy and in daily life when we take a major turning, or when we come up against a specific problem. Dalton's study (1952), for example, dealt with finding lost objects, answering examination questions, solving mathematical and scientific problems, artistic inspiration and even religious conversion.

We could try to investigate how PMIR operates, say, in finding the solution to problems in medicine or how it may be used in the service of needs in everyday life. But I don't think we will make great inroads in studying the psi process until we put *ourselves* in the laboratory. I am not now referring simply to parapsychologists themselves trying to develop and test their own ESP and PK, although there is much merit in that suggestion. I am proposing that parapsychologists begin to use *psi itself* as a means of investigating psi, as Hornell Hart suggested many years ago (Hart, 1948)! Some may well ask: If we have not developed a reliable means of producing psi on demand, how can we use it to

study psi? But, if Stanford's PMIR model is right and I think it is, then one could counter: How not? If psi functions in response to needs, then parapsychology must be placed high on the list of the needy! We need far more understanding of our subject matter than we now possess. We need funding for personnel, laboratories and equipment. We need to be accepted by the academic and, beyond that, by the scientific community. Professional success would enrich our personal lives as well. If we are unaware of the operation of PMIR, perhaps the fault is ours. For one thing, perhaps we shouldn't think in terms of psi functioning *on demand*. I think a more fruitful model of psi would be one that views it as a faculty that cannot be conscripted. Rather, the best we can do is to arrange circumstances so that psi would be likely to volunteer. Think of psi as the archetypal savior, of the one who arrives just in the nick of time to save us from disaster by means beyond any we ourselves could muster.

In a sense, we are optimally placed in parapsychology to call upon the mercies of a savior. The very situation we are set up to investigate is beyond normal means. There may be something very wrong with our basic approach if we do not succeed more often than we do. Something in our approach, or more likely, our attitude, may be preventing us from receiving the fruits of grace. It is here that Stanford's eighth proposition comes into play. It reads: "*Certain factors limit the possibility for or the effectiveness of PMIR. Many such factors are situational. Others are psychological and include behavioral rigidity, inhibition, stereotypy, response chaining, and strong preoccupations blocking the expression of PMIR*" (Stanford, 1974, p. 49).

We have developed an impressive methodology, but to an extent our preoccupation with devising techniques of investigation that are beyond criticism may have resulted in blocking the operation of PMIR in our work. Elsewhere I have tried to show how our approach may be wrong (White, 1980, 1984a, 1984b, 1985), but today I would like to talk not so much about what we are not doing, but about what we *could* do.

First, rather than define psi in terms of what it is not, we might try to develop a positive definition based on what it is or at least on what it does. I lack Stanford's ability to devise precise and detailed definitions, but, for starters, how about this: Psi is a nonsensory means by which needs are answered when all else fails. Note that this also could serve as a definition of magic or of petitionary prayer. Maybe many parapsychologists do not want to admit that that is what we are studying, but it might help if they did. Long ago, J. B. Rhine (1945) pointed out that parapsychology was the laboratory science that could provide em-

pirical backing for the basic teachings of the world's religions. I think he was right and that that is what we should be doing.

Many persons have connected prayer with psi, among them Sir Alister Hardy (1979), Gerald Heard (1944), and H. F. Neff (1971). Heard's book, *A Preface to Prayer* (1944), is a valuable source of insights on the nature of prayer and its relation to psi. Heard hypothesizes that prayer, i.e., contemplation, is the means of continuing evolution. This is because "only in that highest, widest and least limited form of attention, called contemplation, can we hope to glimpse a new conception of what our universe actually is" (p. xii).

In the broadest sense, what we are investigating is the dynamics of faith: Why do some forms of faith work and others not—and why do still others backfire and psi miss? Here again Stanford has a proposition to cover the situation: "*Certain factors dispose toward systematic misuse of PMIR, i.e., use of PMIR in ways which would normally be regarded as against the organism's best interests. . . . [:] neuroticism, a negative self-concept, and direct motivational conflicts such as guilt or an approach-avoidance conflict*" (Stanford, 1974, p. 51).

A growing list of authors have pointed out possible conflictual attitudes parapsychologists may have toward their subject matter, involving considerable resistance to the phenomena they are trying to investigate (Eisenbud, 1967, 1979; Inglis, 1981, 1983; LeShan, 1966; Rogo, 1977; Tart, 1984; Ullman, 1952, 1980; White, 1984a, 1984b, 1985). There is no blame in this situation, only the need to recognize it and be aware of how we may be sabotaging the work we want to forward.

Perhaps this situation would be alleviated somewhat if we were to broaden the context in which we ask our questions. I feel that the broader the context, the better off we will be. If nothing else, it might help to dilute the potential strength of the resistance to our work—ours, as well as that of others. I propose that the best context for viewing psi is against the backdrop of the evolution of consciousness. Most discussions of psi and evolution deal with the question of whether psi is an atavistic ability that is dying out or a new capacity just evolving. I would like to view it as an evolutionary catalyst, present when any new turn is taken, including the evolution of consciousness itself. In the latter case, however, it becomes a conscious process, and here it is that I feel parapsychology has much to offer the behavioral and social sciences and even the applied sciences such as medicine and all forms of psychotherapy.

In developing an evolutionary context for psi, or what Steve Rosen (in press) has called an "evolutionary epistemology," it is necessary to

set forth some underlying assumptions that make such a view possible. The first one is that human beings are still evolving, not so much physically, but psychologically and spiritually. It is human consciousness that is evolving and, as it evolves, it appears to be in the direction of an increased sense of identity with all life, with the universe and with the divine. A second assumption is that psi is an agent of evolution, not only at the physical level, as when, say, a moth evolves a specific coloration that matches the bark of the tree on which members of its species habitually rest, but one that is available for mobilization when any kind of growth takes place, including personal growth and the expansion of consciousness. A third assumption is that the aspect of ourselves that evolves and grows is that which is also addressed by the world's religions.

In a broad sense, religion has always been about what St. Paul called "metanoia," or spiritual change—a permanent change in one's conscious spiritual orientation. This change in consciousness would be one that is more in line with the central religious teachings of the ages, which are basically the same, regardless of culture or of origin. Aldous Huxley called it the "perennial philosophy," or the "Highest Common Factor" found in all theologies: ". . . the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being" (Huxley, 1945, p. vii).

Now what does this have to do with parapsychology? I think the territory we wish to explore is the same as that with which religion deals. William James characterizes the life of religion as consisting "of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto" (James, 1902, p. 53). In parapsychology we have concentrated on the first part: on demonstrating that an unseen order exists, but to continue we may have to concentrate our efforts on the last part: on learning how to adjust harmoniously to that order. I think that in order to advance, we must start with ourselves and develop our own relationship with the unseen order. As scientists, we must test the hypothesis that "our supreme good" lies in doing this. Now, at our present stage, this would call for a large amount of faith, and to marshal it we must move from what in our experience has thus far been most meaningful. I suggest that for parapsychologists, this means identifying once more with whatever impulse it was that led each one of us to enter this field. If we were to do that in good faith, then I think whatever needs are involved would

be supremely answered if we would align ourselves with the unseen world, trusting that there is that in the universe that knows us better than we know ourselves, and that it will lead us and provide for our needs better than we could arrange for consciously. Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard referred to this act as affirming "the nobler hypothesis." Stanford has termed it PMIR. What it means is: We can find the answers we need without using logic and inference, without depending on empiricism and external data to lead us. And this, I propose, may be true of any science. Read any book about scientific discoveries in any discipline and you will find that the new knowledge was not obtained by logical plodding, but was generally inspired and took place in the midst of fortuitous circumstances and synchronistic occurrences, the entire process fraught with high emotional involvement and, initially, a logically and empirically unsupported conviction of an as yet not understood reality that would be the needed answer. The data are provided in response to the scientist's need. The conviction comes first, however, not the data. But once that commitment is made, the data that come to hand are essential to the discovery when it dawns. When it does, the scientific method is used to verify it, but it is an error to think that it is that method that leads to the discovery itself. Nobel prize-winning geneticist Barbara McClintock, who knows quite a bit about scientific discovery, says: "What we label scientific knowledge is lots of fun. You get lots of correlations, but you don't get the truth. . . . Things are much more marvelous than the scientific method allows us to conceive. . . . [Y]ou work with so-called scientific methods to put it into . . . [a frame others will understand] *after* you know" (Keller, 1983, p. 203). But, initially, the answer comes blindly, out of a creative matrix provided by faith and conviction.

But the act of letting go of our rational moorings and letting the tide take us is far from easy. Many of us, as presently constituted, are most likely not able to do it at all, for as T. S. Eliot puts it:

"to apprehend  
 The point of intersection of the timeless  
 With time, is an occupation for the saint—  
 No occupation either, but something given  
 And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,  
 Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender"  
 (Eliot, 1950, p. 136).

Yet let us at least recognize that it is this that is called for, not more powerful statistical techniques or computers with more memory, or more perfectly sound-attenuated rooms, but *surrender—our* surrender.

In *Varieties*, William James observes that to experience the divine, “. . . a critical point must usually be passed, a corner turned within one. Something must give way, a native hardness must break down and liquefy; and this event . . . is frequently sudden and automatic, and leaves the Subject an impression that he has been wrought on by an external power. . . . With those who undergo it in its fullness, no criticism avails to cast doubt on its reality. They *know*, for they have actually *felt* the higher powers, in giving up the tension of their personal will” (James, 1902, pp. 108–109).

And so it could be with psi. Surveys reveal that the factor most compelling to belief in psi is not the evidence marshaled in its favor by parapsychologists, but, rather, having had personal psi experiences (White, 1985). Moreover, it is the parapsychologists who have had first-hand experience of psi and, indeed, are psychic themselves, who are more likely to obtain significant experimental results (Millar, 1979). Broughton goes so far as to raise the question whether subjects are even necessary (Broughton, 1979)! Others, such as Stanford (1981), have countered that this is because these experimenters have a better understanding of the process involved and the requirements of the testing situation. This is probably true, but I do not think it is the operative factor. That, I submit, is that the experience of the reality of psi is contagious. Psi is conducive to more psi, even at a distance. In the presence of or maybe simply only in association with one who knows psi is real, another person can believe it also, at least while the contact or association lasts.

And so we come to the main point of this paper, which is that in order to increase our effectiveness in trying to understand psi, we must turn a corner in ourselves. This would result in a new approach to our subject matter, one based on first-hand experience of the unseen world. Those of us who have already experienced it should actively attempt to teach the rest, not keep our experience under wraps. They must come forth and share the glad tidings. Those of us who have not been blessed with such experience may even be of more value to the field than those who already have. If John Beloff, for example, who is universally respected for his honest skepticism, were to experience the unseen reality, he just might sway thousands!

I believe the door, as I have pointed out before (White, 1980), lies through our individual selves. The key to that door is whatever brought us into this field, whether we be believers, skeptics, or on the fence. In *Varieties*, William James stressed the individualistic, explaining toward the end of the book that he had emphasized the “. . . element of



feeling in religion . . . [because] Individuality is founded in feeling; and the recesses of feeling, the darker, blinder strata of character, are the only places in the world in which we catch real fact in the making, and directly perceive how events happen, and how work is actually done" (James, 1902, p. 492).

Yes! Yes! Yes! I think we will progress much faster in parapsychology if, instead of trying to find our facts ready made for us, we realize instead that we must "catch real fact in the making," and that what brings facts into being, into time and space, is psi. Psi is a kind of mediating synapse that bridges the gap between the subjective and objective worlds, between the old and the new, the known and the new discovery. Psi concretizes the new conception so that it can become observable and understandable to others.

Gardner Murphy and Herbert Spohn echo James, saying that our apprehension of reality is to an extent self-limited. We must develop openness to the new, to the more, in order for "new reals" to "come into existence." They observe that this means not only "The real which can be independently shown to be real by . . . sober methods [i.e., the methods of empirical science which the largest faction of parapsychologists advocate] but with the real which newly comes into existence as evolution goes on" (i.e., the approach to psi which I and, I believe, Michel Grosso, Steve Rosen and Emilio Servadio, among others, advocate) (Murphy and Spohn, 1968, pp. 34-35).

There *are* ways of encouraging the experience of the unseen, but felt reality, of encouraging the "newly real" that is just coming into existence, and the best place to learn them is from the religious traditions of the world. There are hundreds of disciplines available for exploration; I do not think it matters which one you choose. The important thing is to find one that is personally appealing, one that feels right, and then to try to live by its tenets. What is essential is to steep oneself in the teachings of the chosen discipline and to be very alive to what happens, especially as regards the occurrence of psi and fortuitous events in the course of following the discipline. I would guess that as you progress, what you will come to is your self, and that self will open out to the Self of all that is; and you will find that the connections that seem constantly to be taking place have something to do with psi.

Instances of what I am talking about can quite easily be found in autobiographies and biographies and diaries. One example is the largely autobiographical account of psychologist Richard D. Mann (1984) who, as was Joseph Chilton Pearce (1981), was attracted to the way of Swami

Muktananda. Gaining first-hand experience of the teaching of Muktananda led Mann both to transpersonal psychology and, on the way, to parapsychology, via a remote-viewing experiment. From the latter experience, he discovered that "There seems to be a process shaping the flow of events, be they mental or physical, gently nudging them as far as they can be nudged toward providing us with a glimpse of a remarkable truth" (Mann, 1984, p. 51).

He found that in remote viewing "something works to shape . . . the vast reservoir of imagery . . . swirling around inside us . . . by strengthening . . . [those images that are closest] to the target. Why? Simply because they are the closest to the truth of the matter. . . . We are nudged toward realizing the truth . . . until a spontaneous visualization explodes into our conscious awareness" (p. 51).

In science, too, we are nudged toward insight which reveals more about the nature of the universe, including ourselves. Letting ourselves be nudged—following up on the nudges as far as we can—at base means being led by the data. Many parapsychologists espouse the reductionist view that the only data that can be followed are sense-based. I feel that the whole import of parapsychology is that what is essential is to follow subjective data, the felt reality, as well, and that thanks to a century of hard work in parapsychology, *this data can be objectively traced*. The psi test provides objective verification of subjective realities. I feel this tool that has been developed and perfected in parapsychology is a key to a new science—one that can plumb the depths and scale the heights of subjectivity, of the inner world—yet provides objective verification the whole way.

Mann also has something to say about the meaning of psi phenomena: "The nonordinary powers we manifest, inside or outside of the laboratory, are the workings of the universe as teacher. We can have experiences that are catalysts for a process of personal transformation. . . . The accurate remote-viewing image seems not to be something achieved but something received. It comes to us 'unbidden'" (Mann, 1984, pp. 51–52).

Thus, as Gerald Heard has pointed out, using the image of the wind as a symbol for grace, we cannot make the wind blow at will; we *can*, however, set our sails to catch it when it arises. Adherents of any of the world's religions have somehow been able to set their sails and, eventually, have learned to tap—or is it be tapped by?—a different reality. William James (1902) observes: "It is as if there were in the human consciousness *a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception* of what we may call 'something there,' more deep and more general than any of the special and particular 'senses' by which the

current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed" (p. 58).

I suggest it is here, in this experience of an unseen, yet felt, reality, that we have a factor common to religious and psychic experience. James further points out that, as one's sense of the felt presence of the unseen reality fluctuates, "so the believer alternates between warmth and coldness in his faith" (p. 63). Thus, the aim of the religious life is to develop the constant awareness of the unseen presence so that it informs one's whole life. I think this has a lot to do with psi. We know that successful subjects tend to be sheep, that is, believers. Successful experimenters too. The psychology of religion may help us to better understand belief, how it arises, how it can be fostered, how the flame can be kept alive.

A modern school that appeals to me is described in the writings of a student of Gurdjieff, Maurice Nicoll. In one of his books, *The Mark* (Nicoll, 1954), he writes of metanoia, which he defines as a "transformation of the mind" which takes place when one is no longer passively governed by the senses, but realizes that "what is important is one's attitude" (Nicoll, 1954, p. 94). In parapsychology we already know the importance of attitude in regard to our experimental results.

Nicoll (1954) holds that in order for this "transformation to begin a man must cease to follow only the evidence of the senses. He must give up deductions from nature and phenomena and events and occurrences of life" (p. 109). Perhaps psi, as Mann found it to be, is a call to transformation, to metanoia, to finding what we need as persons, as scientists, as parapsychologists in a place we have not looked—a place that we have actively rejected even—a place that is within ourselves rather than in our empirical data. Nicol holds that we cannot expect to progress in understanding if we depend on sense-based knowledge. He says transformation, or rebirth ". . . can only begin with something internal, something seen within . . . and cannot begin from the worship of anything outside . . . , or from any conviction reached by external evidence, such as miracles, or by anything belonging to external life, or . . . anything coming from outside through the channels of the five senses" (Nicoll, 1954, p. 117).

Thus, to understand psi we would have to make use of psi itself, or at least some faculty totally outside external life, the empirical world of the scientist. But aren't we trying to do precisely that when we adopt the assumption that in science one progresses by following empirical data? Follow our data we must, but in our case, the data are within, not outside. We must pioneer a science that begins from within, trusting that by following the nudgings, the felt reality, we will eventually pro-

duce both empirical and rational confirmation of that which initially could only be glimpsed within. As William Blake states it: "What is now proved we once only imagined" (Blake, 1790-1793/1972).

Nicoll holds that there is a higher level within us, a level that is of eternity rather than of time. A psi level, in other words, beyond the sensory level. Surely this is the level we must reach if we are to understand psi, and not simply gawk and marvel at it when it flashes forth. According to Stanford's PMIR model, this is the exception, not the rule. We must trust that psi is there and that we can interact with it even when it is not evident.

Nicoll says metanoia is precipitated by a complete "wheeling around," and that this is "a definite inner act." He even uses the term "revulsion" (p. 147) to describe it. For us perhaps it would mean undertaking the unthinkable, that is, bending every effort to create a science of the individual, of the subjective, of the *inner* world. I think it is the assumption that this cannot be done that retards our progress. To attempt this would even be repulsive to many of us, yet we might take that fact as a clue that this would be the right track for us to follow. For, if revulsion is required, then it is precisely that approach which is most abhorrent to us that we should try to follow!

What is it that Nicoll feels we should turn around *to*? He says we must find what was lost (pp. 147-148), and this in turn has something to do with "being alive and being dead," or, in our terms, with having a "live" question or a "dead" one—one that would elicit psi as opposed to one that would not. He says we must unlearn what we think we know, become as a little child, and "seek for what is lost" (p. 146). According to Nicoll, what we have lost is that "in us [which is] eternally young," that which "can understand beyond this visible world, beyond phenomenal reality" (p. 148). He thinks we lost it through giving undue attention to empiricism and logic. So do I.

We parapsychologists, especially, need to regain what we have lost because, as Nicoll says, "it is capable of understanding a higher logic and a new world" (p. 148). Thus, it is likely that it would be capable of understanding psi.

I think this is profoundly exciting. For if we cannot now understand psi, it need not always be so. It is a condition of our being! If there is that in us which *can* "understand beyond the visible world," then it is likely that it is that in us which can understand psi. And by seeking that part of us, we will also be getting into position to understand what psi is all about. To go further within, to find what we have lost, to purify the instrument of knowing which is our Self, is what our data

already demand. Psi has led us to this step and, if we take it, I think it will lead us still further on—as far as we need to go.

Therefore, I think we need to develop a model of psi as an agent of change, as a catalyst of growth. We must try to integrate our experiments with the personal needs and growth tendencies of both the subjects and the experimenters. Somehow we have to learn to tap the central interests of the principals involved in our experiments in order to elicit psi. Only the highest motivation will serve. Years ago, J. B. Rhine described the level of involvement required: “Anyone who has taken part in a successful psi experiment knows that the pitch of interest developed is something out of the ordinary. . . . As one looks back to his own days of most productive work with psi tests, he recalls a sense of adventure, of suspense, of concentration on the problem that one can acquire only through a very genuine and quite profound personal interest in knowing what the experiment will reveal. But once he is well satisfied, he cannot hope to recover the same spirit again over the same problem, not genuinely. He must press on ahead to a fresh one—one that is, to his way of thinking, more advanced and more challenging” (Rhine, 1948, p. 74).

There still are some parapsychologists whose primary motivation is to prove that psi exists, and for them this may be a sufficient challenge to mobilize whatever it takes for an experimenter to obtain significant results. But for those of us who are already convinced of the existence of psi, to be limited to this problem which is no longer a living question is to be consigned to the boredom and stultification that is antithetical to psi. And, because obtaining evidence for psi still seems to be a major preoccupation of parapsychology, it is no wonder that we catch so little psi in our nets! The situation is self-perpetuating, for to a large extent those who put evidence first are the most voluble and visible of the parapsychologists. It takes exceptional boldness and bravery to even suggest moving in other directions. Those who might be able to do so for the most part hold back.

But those who believe can only succeed by living from their belief. We cannot hold back, because then nothing happens! The believers must ask questions, design experiments and propound theories based on their certain *knowledge* that psi exists. There is a whole new ball game to be developed here and the old rules must not be allowed to govern the play. New rules are required, as demanding in their way as were the old.

If we are going to adopt a model of psi in which it is seen as playing a role in the evolution of consciousness, then we must not lose sight of

the fact that, traditionally, the context in which the evolution of consciousness is viewed is that of the perennial philosophy. It isn't enough simply to let this philosophy remain in the background. I think we should put it at the forefront of our work. This means viewing our work as a kind of calling, a vocation. The same is true of those with whom we work, whether or not they know it. The technicians, the subjects out of the classroom, or off the streets, all should be seen as part of and essential to the creation of a meaningful context, of somehow incarnating the meaning we parapsychologists are trying to discover.

If we were to organize a group of people for purposes of studying psi, I think we should put aside the customary view of trying to locate those persons who are psychic or "create" the conditions in which one not ordinarily psychic might demonstrate it in the experiment. Instead, we should approach the group with the confidence that psi is integral to its functioning, whether or not we can catch it in action. Our goal in working with the group would not so much be to tap psi per se as it would be to view the group as a microcosm of humanity with a life of its own. We must learn to sense the group as we would our own selves. In a sense we are the students and the group or the subject is the teacher. It would be our job literally to get with the group and be led along with it, the way Barbara McClintock gets down there with her maize. A colleague once marvelled that McClintock could see so much when she looked at a cell under the microscope. McClintock replied, "Well, you know, when I look at a cell, I get down in that cell and look around" (Keller, 1983, p. 69). We should become a part of the groups we study—get in there and look around. Each member should try to seek out and perceive the dynamic gradient of the group. In what direction lies its natural tendency? What are the factors with which each member can identify yet which, upon consensus, are seen as aspects of the *group*, not the individuals composing it? Once identified, what is the gradient of those factors, in which direction are they tending? If we put fostering this growth first and both individually and collectively try to discover where new growth is possible, psi may appear without our even trying to produce it. Montague Ullman is doing something like this with his psi dream-sharing technique (Ullman, 1980).

In other words, we should view the psi test in the same way as a doctor might use a thermometer to monitor body temperature while he is concentrating on the patient as a whole person and trying to understand the meaning of his or her symptoms. He would get nowhere

if he only concentrated on the body temperature out of any meaningful context. Each group has its own gestalt or central tendency, even as does each individual, and it is most likely at the point where those tendencies are interacting with the world out there that psi may come into play. If we then put that central tendency first and make it our aim to understand it, then psi would be ours as a byproduct of the process unfolding in the situation. In studying maize, McClintock insists that one must have a "feeling for the organism" (Keller, 1983, p. 100). We too must have a feeling for the organism we are studying, an organism of which we ourselves are a part. For us this organism must be a unit consisting of not less than two and possibly up to and including the entire species, perhaps all of life, maybe even the universe itself and all it comprises.

Parapsychology may be one of the few disciplines in the modern world where a concerted effort is being made to seek the holy flame and, when found, to guard against its going out. When we come closer to understanding psi, we come closer to the fire. You can even feel it: the warm flush at the temples, the rush to the heart, the way the skin prickles, the sense of meaning that charges the blood, making the pores open like millions of windows. And then you may well feel tired and you might take a nap and, when you wake up, you may have forgotten all about what you saw, or else you may brush it off as a weak moment or as a dream.

This is not tending the fire. How does one go about tending the flame? First, by recognizing it is there and by making every effort not to forget it, to put it first. How does this translate into doing science? To begin with, I think parapsychology could play an important role in forging a new view of science. We can restore to science a recognition of its origins, which, for the most part, scientists now deny. According to philosopher of science Roger Jones (1982, p. 213), this began when science broke away from philosophy and lost sight of what I have called the flame, of the motivation science once shared with philosophy. Jones calls it "the exploration of nature in quest of the meaning and purpose of human existence" (Jones, 1982, p. 213). The great hope, it seems to me, is that parapsychology could return all science to that search for meaning, because, although we would turn away from it, too, if we possibly could, as we already *have*, we cannot continue to do so and live, that is, have phenomena to study.

One thing each one of us can do is make a choice. We can choose to blindly follow reductionist science, or we can choose to follow the nudgings of the findings of modern physics and of our own data. Roger

Jones points out: "One of the greatest creative achievements of the human mind, modern science, refuses to recognize the depths of its own creativity, and has now reached the point in its development where that very refusal blocks its further growth. Modern physics screams at us that there is no ultimate material reality and that whatever it is we are describing, the human mind cannot be parted from it. And yet we turn deaf ears to this profound cry. True, we don't know how to accommodate this idea: we don't know how to modify or enlarge physics so as to assimilate the mind which it has for so long exiled from its territory. But that is a poor excuse. We are acting out of fear and ignoring the moral responsibility inherent in our creative act. It is time to acknowledge and exercise our own redemptive powers. And there *are* clues all around us—in psychology, in philosophy, in the arts, and elsewhere" (Jones, 1982, p. 208).

Although the aim of all science is objectivity, I submit that the motivation for it is not and the path to it is not. No one becomes a scientist in spirit without being moved to do so from spirit, from an intuitive sense of importance, meaning, awe even; and from a feeling of personal involvement, of having a role to play, no matter how small or large (White, 1980).

I do not think parapsychology is the only science that must recognize its wellsprings. I think it is science as a whole in this century. I think all of the sciences as they progress must come to this recognition. But the last has a chance to be first. We can and maybe were even meant to lead the way. Certainly *we* will never succeed at *their* game. Instead we must find our *own* way and succeed so well that *they* will have to follow us!

William James, too, felt this was the case. He characterizes the "impersonality of the scientific attitude" as shallow, saying, "So long as we deal with the cosmic and the general, we deal only with the symbols of reality, but *as soon as we deal with private and personal phenomena as such, we deal with realities in the completest sense of the term*" (James, 1902, pp. 488-489). He proposes, however, that the rift between the realities of science and religion may not be permanent, and that ". . . the final human opinion may . . . revert to the more personal style. . . . If this were so, the rigorously impersonal view of science might one day appear as having been a temporarily useful eccentricity rather than the definitively triumphant position which the sectarian scientist at present so confidently announces it to be" (James, 1902, p. 491).

It is entirely possible that if we do forge ahead and develop a new kind of science, we may succeed in ways we cannot now imagine. This is because in ways beyond our conception psi would be actively involved



in our work. I think this is happening wherever creativity is expressed, including in any science.

It is a fairly common experience, for example, for writers, artists, scientists and persons who succeed in any field of endeavor to have fortuitous things happen to them, "lucky" circumstances that forward their activity, whatever it might be. Things happen to these people that, had they not happened, would have left them far behind their current position in the ongoing process of growth and increased mastery of self and of one's chosen corner of the world. One reads about these epiphanies or synchronicities in biographies and autobiographies or, occasionally, even in a scientific exposition. I think we should pay very special heed to these gifts of the god because they certainly appear to be occurrences of PMIR. Granted, they are spontaneous. But they may also be viewed within the context of need, of calling, of commitment and of growth. I think it is our role not simply to reap the benefits of this psi guidance in our work, but to carry the understanding of its operation into our lives and to new levels of consciousness.

It is important for us to realize that reaching these new levels is essential for the progress of parapsychology. This is because, as succinctly stated by Aldous Huxley (1945): "Knowledge is a function of being. When there is a change in the being of the knower, there is a corresponding change in the nature and amount of knowing" (p. vii).

We need to know more about the connection between levels of belief and understanding or knowing about psi. Many of us in the field of parapsychology seem to be fixated at the level of needing to demonstrate that psi actually exists, ostensibly to convince the skeptics, but secretly I think it is to convince ourselves. If we do not yet believe psi is a reality, we cannot be blamed for pursuing this path. But anyone who really is convinced of psi has got to ask different questions, because he or she is coming from a different place than those whose main goal is to find evidence of it. Those who wish to begin from a point where psi is accepted have a pretty hard time of it, but I think we would do well to give such persons some rein and see what they might find. One problem here is that often such persons are too impatient with the scientific method and so are not willing or able to design valid experiments. This could be rectified by a cooperative approach in which believers are largely responsible for the direction of research within the limits of our present methodology, the responsibility for which would largely rest with our hard-core experimentalists. Unfortunately, at present this is only a pipedream, not because there are not enough believers wanting to experiment nor insufficient research techniques. The problem is that our attitude is wrong. There is mutual distrust on

both sides which results in each one deriding the skills of the other. I cannot help but think that if we could only welcome each other, rather than ward one another off, we would have a much easier time of it.

Nevertheless, we cannot afford to ignore this problem. To do so amounts to professional suicide. If what we want is to be accepted as a legitimate field of study, we have to convince people (including ourselves) that we are investigating legitimate phenomena. We have tried to do this by concentrating on our methodology, our technology, and I feel this has caused us to lose sight of our goal of understanding psi and helping others to do the same.

No matter how pristine our data, many people remain unconvinced by them. If personal experience is the primary factor in convincing people that psi is real, we must recognize that this applies to us as well. Each budding researcher must discover for him or herself that there is something real here to be investigated. There are those who discount everything done in the field to date except the most recent experiments, i.e., those with which he or she is familiar. Brian Inglis (1983) calls this retrocognitive dissonance. I think it may be of central importance to be consciously aware of where each of us is in the continuum of belief in psi, because our position in that continuum is going to determine the questions we ask and how we try to answer them and even the theories we devise to explain what does or does not happen.

Someone more gifted than I needs to describe the steps in the continuum of belief in psi and the corresponding assumptions associated with each. But whatever they may be, being on some of those steps is bound to be better than being on others when it comes to investigating psi. And that means investigating the intersection between the inner and outer worlds. I believe psi is the link, the swinging wicket between the seen and the unseen worlds, as Gerald Heard used to put it. Sometimes it swings inward and that which was previously thought to be physically remote is found within. At other times it swings outward and then we find our most inward thoughts mirrored in the outer world. But what remains constant is the self that stands between, the one who experiences the inner or outer connection. It is that self with which we must work and I sense it is psi that makes the connection happen. Some parapsychologists are spending much energy trying to apply psi in specific situations. I feel it can be applied in *any* situation in which growth is required. If this turns out actually to be the case, it would make parapsychology an extremely important discipline, for it would hold the key to what everyone is seeking! If we associate psi with the search for meaning, for connection, for growth, for union, then parapsychology would be at the heart of the evolving view of human

nature, of life and of the universe (White, 1983). In a recent Tarrytown interview, Bill Pilder, an ex-priest who is mainstreaming with displaced steel workers from Johnstown, observes: "We're at an evolutionary moment where most people want to connect their inner reality with their work in the outside world. Significantly, the entire planet needs us to do just that. . . . This moment in history demands a different kind of leadership—one that understands the deeper self, and consciously connects up with the well-being of the country and the world" ("Mainstreaming," 1985, p. 6).

I submit that understanding the dynamic that makes that connection is the true work of the parapsychologist. The world is getting ready for us. Let us not fail to get ourselves ready for the world!

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blake, W. "The marriage of heaven and hell." In W. H. Stevenson (Ed.), *The Poems of William Blake* (p. 18). New York: W. W. Norton, 1972. (Original work published 1790–1793)
- Broughton, R. S. "Repeatability and experimenter effect: Are subjects really necessary?" *Parapsychology Review*, 1979, 10(1), 11–14.
- Dalton, G. F. "The solution of problems in dreams." *Journal of the Society for Psychological Research*, 1952, 36, 645–673.
- Eisenbud, J. "The problem of resistance to psi." In W. G. Roll (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Parapsychological Association No. 3, 1966* (pp. 63–79). Durham, NC: Parapsychological Association, 1967.
- Eisenbud, J. "How to make things null and void: An essay-review of Brian Inglis' *Natural and Supernatural*." *Journal of Parapsychology*, 1979, 43, 140–152.
- Eliot, T. S. "The dry salvages." In T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909–1950* (pp. 130–137). New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950.
- Hardy, A. *The Spiritual Nature of Man: A Study of Contemporary Religious Experience*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.
- Hart, H. "Some suggested research projects in parapsychology." *Journal of Parapsychology*, 1948, 12, 12–15.
- Heard, G. A. *Preface to Prayer*. New York: Harper, 1944.
- Huxley, A. *The Perennial Philosophy*. New York: Harper, 1945.
- Inglis, B. "Power corrupts: Skepticism corrodes." In W. G. Roll and J. Beloff (Eds.), J. McAllister (Asst. Ed.), *Research in Parapsychology 1980* (pp. 143–151). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1981.
- Inglis, B. "Retrocognitive dissonance." In W. G. Roll, J. Beloff and R. A. White (Eds.), *Research in Parapsychology 1982* (pp. 69–72). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1983.
- James, W. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. New York: Modern Library, 1902.
- Jones, R. S. *Physics as Metaphor*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.
- Keller, E. F. *A Feeling for the Organism: The Life and Work of Barbara McClintock*. New York: W. H. Freeman, 1983.
- LeShan, L. "Some psychological hypotheses on the non-acceptance of parapsychology as a science." *International Journal of Parapsychology*, 1966, 8, 367–385.
- "Mainstreaming America's displaced workers." *The Tarrytown Letter*, 1985, No. 50, 3–6.
- Mann, R. D. *The Light of Consciousness: Explorations in Transpersonal Psychology*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984.

- Millar, B. "The distribution of psi." *European Journal of Parapsychology*, 1979, 3, 78-110.
- Murphy, G. E., and Spohn, H. E. *Encounters with Reality*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968.
- Neff, H. R. *Psychic Phenomena and Religion: ESP, Prayer, Healing, Survival*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971.
- Nicoll, M. *The Mark*. London: Vincent Stuart, 1954.
- Pearce, J. C. *The Bond of Power*. New York: Dutton, 1981.
- Rhine, J. B. "Editorial: Parapsychology and religion." *Journal of Parapsychology*, 1945, 9, 1-4.
- Rhine, J. B. "Conditions favoring success in psi tests." *Journal of Parapsychology*, 1968, 12, 58-75.
- Rogo, D. S. "Parapsychology and the genesis of doubt." *Parapsychology Review*, 1977, 8(6), 20-22.
- Rosen, S. "Parapsychology's 'four cultures': Can the schism be mended?" In R. A. White and J. Solvvin (Eds.), *Research in Parapsychology 1984*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985.
- Stanford, R. G. "An experimentally testable model for spontaneous psi events. I. Extrasensory events." *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1974, 68, 34-57.
- Stanford, R. G. "Are we shamans or scientists?" *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1981, 75, 61-70.
- Tart, C. T. "Acknowledging and dealing with the fear of psi." *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1984, 78, 133-143.
- Ullman, M. "On the nature of resistance to psi phenomena." *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1952, 46, 11-13.
- Ullman, M. "Psi communication through dream sharing." In B. Shapin and L. Coly (Eds.), *Communication and Parapsychology* (pp. 202-227). New York: Parapsychology Foundation, 1980.
- White, R. A. "On the genesis of research hypotheses in parapsychology." *Parapsychology Review*, 1980, 11(1), 6-9.
- White, R. A. "The future of parapsychology." *Journal of Religion and Psychical Research*, 1983, 6, 220-226.
- White, R. A. "Parapsychology and the transcendent." *Christian Parapsychologist*, 1984, 5, 138-150. (a)
- White, R. A. "Parapsychology and transpersonal psychology." Paper given at the Second Annual East Coast Conference of the Association of Transpersonal Psychology, Mohonk Mountain House, New Paltz, NY, 1984. (b)
- White, R. A. "The spontaneous, the imaginal, and psi: Foundations for a depth parapsychology." In R. A. White and J. Solvvin (Eds.), *Research in Parapsychology 1984* (pp. 166-190). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985.

## DISCUSSION

HALL: Rhea, that is an exciting paper. There are a lot of things in it that I like. Because things seem to be drawing to a close I want to first thank the Parapsychology Foundation for arranging this meeting on this important topic. I realize the Foundation is really people who have to put in a lot of work and a lot of effort. A minor point is that you cite Dr. Rhine's editorial in the *Journal of Parapsychology* in 1945. There is a more recent paper by him that he did at Southern Methodist University in 1977 on parapsychology and religion and one the year

before at the Southwest meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion that are probably his most mature thoughts on this subject. If it is of any use to consider republishing those with the proceedings of this conference I can get those for us.\* The main thing I want to say about your paper is that you have very clearly pointed to what seems to me to be the biggest difficulty and that is how to find the personal context, the individual structure in which the psi event has meaning. And that is what stands out so much in the classic stories that we hear from the East and the West about exceptional people, saints and yoga practitioners. We need to be able to find that in the ordinary individual life and I am convinced that it is there or we could not measure it at all. Now picking up on Rex Stanford's thoughts that you quoted, it is conceivable that God might use psi mediated instrumental responses to give us what we need. The problem is that the "we" that ask for something may not be the "we" that we are going to be when we move along the path of spiritual development. I think God certainly is not the kind of entity that would give us the stone if we asked for bread, unless we needed the stone in order to move in the direction of spiritual development and then that might be what we get. The difficulty is to find the individual in the process of spiritual growth and relate psi to that, instead of the ego where it can be measured so easily. And that is what is so difficult in trying to move to this new frontier research that you are talking about. I think we agree that psi would seem to be associated with the emergence of higher forms of humanity. That is consistent with what Jung says about individuation and what religious persons say about movement toward God. And it seems to me that to understand psi in the form that you are trying to point toward, we have to see it in relation to this individual unique and very personal experiment that we are each engaged in deeply and unavoidably.

WHITE: I say "yes" to everything you have said. I just want to point out that although I see it in terms of the evolution of higher forms of humanity it has to start with the individual—I would see it first at the individual level. Although we only have our egos to begin with, if we pay attention to our dreams or we get into some form of psychotherapy, or if we go with our feelings, and what we may call our highest feelings, this eventually would lead to a psychotherapy or some other kind of growth discipline that would help us on our way or we would meet the outer guru as was brought up earlier, I believe by John.

---

\* See Appendix.

ROSEN: I appreciated Rhea's presentation very much. I would like to address the question of whether the development we have been speaking about must occur at the level of the individual *or* at a social level *or* at the level of the entire species. It seems to me that the very fact that we continue to think so dichotomously about these levels is indicative of a limitation. I would like to suggest that the development we are seeking may entail a *reconciliation* of these levels.

I have a similar reaction to Rhea's earlier suggestion that the evolution of consciousness would be more spiritual or emotional, as opposed to physical. Again, I propose an alternative approach in which we could view the evolution of consciousness as *reconciling* spiritual, emotional and physical levels of our being.

WHITE: I said that I just knew that we were not going to evolve physically, maybe get a third foot or something like that, but it would be primarily an evolving consciousness which for me includes the body and everything moving as one. So I agree with you there. As far as political and social growth are concerned, what bothers me about that is if you take a bunch of undeveloped individuals and try to put them together you are not going to come out with too much and that is the problem with the world today, I think. I don't think we have really evolved to the point where we can make the best use of our social and political opportunities.

ROSEN: My point about the evolution of consciousness is not that it would exclude change at the concrete level of the individual in favor of some disembodied social abstraction. Again, I am trying to call attention to the possibility that to evolve, we may need to overcome the deeply engrained dichotomy between the individual and the group, the concrete and the abstract, the embodied and the disembodied. For the kind of change I am speaking of, individual growth and communal transformation would be inseparable. Therefore, the community that would result would be no disembodied abstraction. We might call it an "embodied communality"—neither personal nor impersonal, but *transpersonal*.

WHITE: Would you have in mind an intentional community, that is, for example, a monastery, or would you have in mind momentary groups or what?

ROSEN: I don't think that going into a monastery would be an answer at this stage in our history. I have in mind something more in keeping with the challenges arising in the modern context. Computers, for example, might play a role. A scenario of computer linkage is the sort of speculation we might want to consider.

WHITE: By the way, Steve has a new book out, this image that he is bringing up now is in the conclusion; it is well worth reading: *The Moebius Seed*.

PERRY: I just would like to thank you very much for that exciting paper. It really caught the excitement of someone who has seen the relevance of commitment to faith in parapsychology. I found it particularly helpful where you said that the most important thing is to steep oneself in the teaching of the chosen discipline. There are too many people around who look for an easy eclectism and think they can pick and choose bits and bobs from various disciplines. Clearly as we have seen in things like saintly psi, those who are really producing massive psi effects are those who are so deeply committed to one particular discipline that they have found their true selves through it. Thank you for what you have said.

SERVADIO: I am a veteran of these conferences. In fact, I have attended twenty-seven out of thirty-four of them. It would be an absolutely impossible task to summarize this very beautiful and very instructive convention. But I would like to propose a word of thanks to the people who have made this conference so profitable and so enriching. First of all I would like to mention our President, Mrs. Eileen Coly, her daughter Lisette, the Vice President of the Parapsychology Foundation, Mr. Robert Coly, who remained rather behind the curtains if I may say so, but to whom gratitude is due, and to Mr. Allan Angoff. Please join me in thanking these people and all who made this conference so beautiful and interesting.

ANGOFF: The Foundation thanks all participants and observers. Ladies and gentlemen, the 34th Annual International Conference of the Parapsychology Foundation is adjourned.