

CLOSING REMARKS

STANLEY KRIPPNER: In listening to the papers presented this weekend, I have recalled with great fondness the wisdom of Eileen Garrett and the keen sense of discrimination that permitted her to allocate the Foundation's efforts and finances with such care and precision. I am pleased that this same intuition and intelligence is shared by her daughter, Eileen Coly, and her granddaughter, Lisette Coly, who carry out the Foundation's work and who have planned this 36th conference of the Parapsychology Foundation.

These appear to be the best of times and the worst of times for parapsychology. The forthcoming articles on psi research in the prestigious journal *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* mark a new level of acceptance for the field. The Society for Scientific Exploration, a recently founded professional organization, includes psi research among the anomalous phenomena worthy of discussion at its annual meetings and for publication in its journal. The joint article by Ray Hyman and Charles Honorton in a 1986 issue of the *Journal of Parapsychology* is an example of recent attempts by advocates and critics to find a common ground of agreement, a move also obvious in several features in *The Zetetic Scholar*. The Parapsychological Association's 1985 report, "Terms and Methods in Parapsychological Research," demonstrates a consensus among serious workers in the field not only in regard to definitions of terms, but regarding commitment to scientific methods. The series, *Advances in Parapsychological Research* has received positive reviews in *Contemporary Psychology*, an official journal of the American Psychological Association. Parapsychology now has its own abstract journal, *Parapsychology Abstracts International*, and its own data base of literature, "Psi Linc." The establishment of the Koestler Chair at the University of Edinburgh enhances the status of parapsychology as a topic of academic study at the doctoral level.

On the other hand, the Chair in Parapsychology at the University of Utrecht is endangered due to lack of funds; the parapsychology laboratory at the same university is about to close its doors. An outstanding psi research laboratory in the United States is also in danger of closing unless additional grants can be obtained in the next few months. Within the last several years, more parapsychology laboratories around the world have closed than have opened. More critical books

about parapsychology have been published than ever before: some of them are constructive and useful, but others demonstrate a proclivity to distort and ridicule in order to make their points. Indeed, a report issued in 1987 by the prestigious National Academy of Sciences found "no scientific justification . . . for the existence of parapsychological phenomena."

It is at this pivotal time in the history of our field that this conference has been held and that these excellent papers have been given. For me, the themes of learning, memory and metaphor run through the papers, providing some provocative suggestions as to how future research projects can be designed. I will mention only a few of the salient points developed in each paper to illustrate what I have learned this weekend.

Juagen Keil insisted that we maintain our interest in spontaneous cases as well as in the real life situations in which they are embedded. I endorse his advocacy of initiating additional group sitting projects, following Batchelder's suggestions. A group sitting can take pressure from the individual as well as create a psi-conductive atmosphere. Not all the effects of group sitting are amenable to proper scientific evaluation, but those which can be assessed certainly make the effort worthwhile. The compelling evidence that Dr. Keil feels is needed to gain recognition for the field may well come from sitting groups, at least in part.

Julian Isaacs renders us a service when he describes the complex emotional and intellectual dynamics that make it difficult for researchers to comprehend the lawful nature of psi phenomena. For example, how do we cope with a subject's "performance anxiety"? Sex therapists face similar difficulties with their clients and use such techniques as sensate focus, rehearsal situations, surrogate and imagery to decrease the anxiety. Perhaps parapsychological analogies of these techniques would prove useful, e.g., having a subject rehearse a psi task before an attempt is made that will be record and evaluated. Dr. Isaacs' emphasis on understanding the "lore" of psi (as well as its "laws") could prove extremely useful, even if each laboratory is found to develop its own lore over the years.

Marilyn Schlitz used the cultural independence vs. diffusion controversy to discuss the nature of coincidence and its relationship to psi. By conceptualizing the "collective unconscious" and "morphic resonance" as metaphors instead of as mechanisms, we can begin to study their possible validity and relevance. But neuropsychology's vaunted "memory trace" is also a metaphor, one that still lacks a demonstrable mechanism. The "deep structures" spoken of by some anthropologists

are also metaphorical, and may provide parapsychology with a useful approach to thinking about psi phenomena. Ms. Schlitz' paper demonstrates, once again, the need for anthropology to make a greater impact upon our field.

Ruth-Inge Heinze gave us a vivid experiential account that exemplifies how unusual survival abilities can be learned in a response to stress. But parapsychologists need to heed her warning that naming and labeling anomalous experiences may lead us away from the source of those events. Dr. Heinze uses the "resonance" metaphor to describe a worthy topic of parapsychological investigation, one which can be stifled by any early education that limits and shrinks our perceptions and abilities through fear and non-acceptance.

Arthur Hastings proposed that psi is "value neutral," a judgment with which I agree. It is tiresome to hear people of various metaphysical persuasions insist that psi is "sacred" or "demonic," that it is proof of a "higher consciousness" or a "lower consciousness." However, psi can be used in a variety of ways and Dr. Hastings gives us the first sensible report I have heard of the recent silver commodities experiment as well as a persuasive rationale for its results. Taking a systems approach, he points out how interpersonal relations can be affected by mutual psi at unconscious levels of the human psyche.

Robert Morris used "synchronicity" and "archetype" as metaphors to explore psi as communication. Viewing the archetype as a metaphor for a buildup of overlaid experiences demystifies the term, even though it will not please those who are devoted to the continued mystification of this and other potentially useful Jungian concepts. Dr. Morris' communication model, I believe, can be especially useful in determining whether or not any particular coincidence has a psi component. His application of the model to remote viewing data is especially ingenious.

Vernon Neppe proposed a multi-axial descriptive classification system for studying "subjective paranormal experience." This perspective allows us to examine hallucinations from a non-pathological viewpoint, given that recent data indicate that a significant number of people report perception for which there are no apparent external stimuli. It also demonstrates that there is no single phenomenology of psi; the many variables involved may be one reason for the replication problems parapsychologists have experienced. Dr. Neppe's comments on neuropsychological correlates with subjective paranormal experience reflect considerable case material and need to be the topic of in-depth investigations.

Helen Palmer presented an experiential account of ostensible psi phenomena that occurred during a life crisis she had experienced. One

value of these episodes was the discriminations she began to make between precognition and projection. Psi researchers are aware of this dilemma, and those who work with spontaneous cases regularly encounter cases of deluded people who are convinced that they have insight into the future—a future that, strangely enough, coincides with their own biases and preconceptions. Unfortunately, these projections sometimes take the form of paranoia, with the result that harm is done to oneself as well as to other people.

Keith Harary presented a well-documented list of negative psi stereotypes in films and television programs. His examples are well-selected and accurate. However, it seems to me that the media presentations of shamans have bucked this trend and have actually improved over the past decade, e.g., “Emerald Forest,” “La Bamba,” “Never Cry Wolf.” As for the “Star Trek” films, Dr. Harary correctly observes that Spock is given extraordinary psi powers. I would add that this is unusual in that Spock, in Jungian terms, represents the “thinking” quadrant of the Enterprise team (Kirk is definitely an “intuitive” type, the mechanical Kelly is a “sensing” type and the spacecraft’s physician is a “feeling” type). Associating psi with logic and rationality is a welcome challenge to the prevailing stereotypes; in show business terms, it is “casting against type.”

Rex Stanford pointed out that case studies often provide suggestive evidence that can be explored experimentally. Dr. Stanford extended the search for data to folklore, observing that folktales demonstrate the role played by faith, suffering and affect in psi functioning. He also contrasted the respective advantages of the “proof-oriented” and “pragmatic” approaches to case studies, the former seeking for authenticity and veridical confirmation, the latter searching for common patterns and processes. In addition to the advantages Dr. Stanford listed for the latter approach, I would add Michael Persinger’s pioneering work in identifying the geomagnetic correlates of subjective paranormal experiences. Dr. Persinger has found a common pattern of calm (rather than stormy) geomagnetic activity among collections of readers’ anecdotes in a popular magazine, a case collection in a professional book, a psychical research society’s survey and laboratory dream-target correspondences. These data now need to be replicated by other observers utilizing additional data banks.

These eight papers remind us that there are many ways in which human beings attempt to understand their world. Some rely on dogma—the literal acceptance of dictates from an authority figure or from sacred literature (e.g., the worldview of one’s parent or lover, the statements in the Bible, the Koran, or Karl Marx). Others elevate

their own experience above everything else, e.g., believing only what their senses tell them, only acknowledging insights gained through their emotions or feelings, only accepting knowledge gained by divine revelation. A small number of individuals give primacy to science—an ordered way of making observation, formulating principles and categories based on these observations and testing the formulations with additional observations. Still others are aware of problems that ensue if any one of these ways of knowing is accepted to the exclusion of the others, and take an eclectic position when it comes to deciding what is “true,” “valid,” or “right” for them.

In the case of psi phenomena, parapsychologists are committed to a scientific study of the anomalous experiences that are a part of all cultures’ records, histories and accounts of their world. Parapsychology’s scientific stance stands in contrast to those who dogmatically assert, “Psi can not possibly exist because I have never experienced it” or “because it is not consistent with the doctrine of logical positivism” (or “of dialectical materialism,” or “of the writings of B. F. Skinner”). But it also contradicts those who say there is no need to study psi because “Eastern religions demonstrated its existence millennia ago” (or “because Shirley MacLaine wrote about it in her latest bestseller”), or because “I just *feel* it is true,” or “I have psychic experiences all the time, and don’t need any laboratory data to confirm them.”

The Parapsychological Association’s report on terms and methods in parapsychological research provides a useful approach to the study of psi phenomena. It states:

When an event is classified as a psi phenomenon it is claimed that all known channels for the apparent interaction have been eliminated.

Thus it is clear that labelling an event as a psi phenomenon does not constitute an explanation for that event, but only indicates an event for which a scientific explanation needs to be sought.

It is in this framework that the weekend’s papers have been written and presented. The human sciences have made major advances over the past several years, but there are still gaps in our universe. Our picture of the human being is still incomplete. I am confident that the ideas you have heard and the data that have been presented will bring us a few steps closer to closing these gaps and fathoming the unexplained events, reports and incidents that have provoked the curiosity of parapsychologists over the years.

LISETTE COLY: The Parapsychology Foundation wishes to thank our panelists for their excellent presentations and lively discussions. Thanks are also due to our many observers who made the effort to

join us and who contributed so much to the success of this conference. We have two people we are particularly indebted to. Dr. Julian Isaacs was instrumental in the early days of formulating this conference and I thank you for letting me "pick your brain." Above all, a very special thank you is due our conference moderator, Dr. Stanley Krippner. Stan runs things so smoothly and apparently effortlessly that he makes keeping the conference in line seem easy . . . and I can assure you that this is not the case. Thank you again, Stan.

As we close this conference some additional thoughts of Eileen Garrett seem appropriate. She once wrote "What of the future? In general it seems to me that two branches of science in particular are drawing very close in their subject matter, though they are extremely diverse in many ways: modern physics and modern psychology. Inescapably, they are coming to a place of meeting, and the scene of that meeting will be the area of human personality. Each has much to give to and learn from the other in the study of man. Is it too much to hope and to expect that the great mass of data provided by parapsychology can act as a bridge by which they can be brought together in the study of man himself, incomparably the most interesting and important fact in our universe?"

I expect that the answer to this question will have to await a future time and perhaps a future conference. Until then, Ladies and Gentlemen, the 36th International Conference of the Parapsychology Foundation is adjourned.