

MINUS VERSUS PLUS AWARENESS—AND PSI

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It is very likely that psi occurrences are more frequent than we usually suspect. Several years ago an Italian lawyer, by the name of S. Occhipinti, wrote a book of little scientific value, whose main idea, however, was very well expressed by its strange title: *Men Converse and Do Not Know It*.¹ What he meant was that people are very often, if not always, in ESP touch with each other. The great inconvenience of the situation, he pointed out, was that, as a rule, they are not aware of it!

The likelihood of this idea seems to be substantiated by the development of parapsychological investigation and by research on psi-gamma phenomena in particular. The main trend of psychical research in its first decades was, to put it rather bluntly, the exploration of an unknown territory, accompanied by the hope of finding some extraordinary and amazing stone here and there. So-called spontaneous phenomena seemed to happen to a minority. Prominent mediums were so scarce, that men of science were willing to cross oceans or continents to attend their performances. Things changed when statistical methods were applied on a large scale. It slowly appeared that whereas "big" results were exceptional, most people, if not practically everybody, could show in the long run some amount of psi sensitivity, small as it may be, even if, better than nothing, in the form of psi missing. Somebody contended that people absolutely opaque to psi were as rare as people who are completely insensitive to music. Statistical experts made a schema of this concept using the classical Quetelet curve, where the restricted top represented highly gifted people, whereas the vast majority was represented by a long line which tended to the abscissa without ever reaching it.

One could, perhaps, say that the most significant aspect of the present phase of parapsychological research has been represented by the efforts that have been made to extract the psychic ore from the amorphous mineral. All sorts of techniques have been used; from the psychological evaluation of subjects and investigators (and of their

interpersonal relationships as well) to hypnosis; from sensory deprivation to the use of drugs. Needless to add, the study of those rare people who show high mediumistic gifts with a certain continuity has not been discarded. However, the number of these people seems to get nearer and nearer the abscissa line. Paraphrasing a famous verse by the French poet François Villon, some parapsychologists of our time might be inclined to exclaim: "Where are the mediums of old?"

The situation seems to be rather paradoxical. Usually, the parapsychological investigator is in a keen state of awareness, and his wish, perhaps not quite on the conscious level, would be to extend such characteristics as clarity of mind, precision in assessing phenomena and their details, etc., to the territory of his enquiries. Unfortunately, he has to admit that this territory, as far as parapsychological investigation is concerned, is usually characterized by states of *minus* awareness, and that in many cases, expecting a subject to be aware *and* give evidence of psi is like expecting a person to swim without getting wet. Mediumistic trance, hypnosis, sleep, drug-intoxication, day-dreaming, hysteriform conditions and what not are some of the altered states of consciousness that have come under the scrutiny of keen researchers, looking for psi occurrences. In fact, all such states can be, or have been found at times to be, psi-conductive; but if they have anything in common, it is the characteristic of diminished or absent awareness. In a previous work,² considering mainly mediumship but also other particular states that come under examination, I wrote that in real trance conditions "a medium is cut off from his usual ways of apprehending reality, and does not remember at all what happened while he was impersonating such and such an 'entity,' or while conducting his performance according to a well-known design. If we ask people who do not actually fall into a state of deep trance, and who keep a good amount of contact with the experimenters, they will tell us that they felt somewhat 'dreamy,' or as if they were slightly intoxicated, or, at the most, that they had felt a different way of relating with objects, as if the distinction between subject and object had lost a good deal of its customary aspect. But these descriptions do not take us very far, and, moreover, they are not typical of mediumistic states. Indeed, we can easily find them if we question people who are simply in states of introversion, drowsiness, day-dreaming, or the like."

This far, I do not think I have put forward anything very new or sensational. After all, the concept of a *minus* function, such as was suggested years ago by Jan Ehrenwald, is not very different from the *minus* awareness I have been insisting upon. But now, as a personal contribution, I will try to summarize some gleanings from my own

work, both as a psychoanalyst and as one of the persons who first used hallucinogenic drugs in order to see whether such drugs could provoke or facilitate ESP in some subjects.

Surely, patients in the analytic situation are aware of what is going on; but here I am tempted to add: "more or less." The relaxed state of the patient (facilitated by his lying down on the couch), the dim lighting and the free-association technique, are usually conducive to a state of consciousness which is somewhat different from the usual, waking condition. But curiously enough, the analyst himself takes—nay, *has* to take—an attitude which certainly is not his customary one when he looks for a bibliographical reference or when he discusses a scientific point with a colleague. Freud himself, in a paper that was published as early as 1912,³ warned the analyst as follows: "All conscious exertion is to be withheld from the capacity for attention, and one's 'unconscious memory' is to be given full play; or to express it in terms of technique, pure and simple: One has simply to listen and not to trouble to keep in mind anything in particular." And further on: "The analyst must bend his own unconscious like a receptive organ towards the emerging unconscious of the patient, be as the receiver of the telephone to the disc."

It seems fairly apparent that the state suggested by Freud could be properly termed as of more or less diminished awareness, not unlike the state of the patient.

Recently a Mexican psychoanalyst, Jaime Cardena del Rio,⁴ has gone much further. He suggests that the analyst should deliberately, by various methods, develop paranormal gifts in himself, in order to be able to use them in his therapeutic work. This bold idea is obviously open to discussion. However, Cardena himself admits that, after all, extrasensory occurrences during analysis show altered or *minus* states of awareness as a regular feature, both in the patient and in the analyst. As I have shown in many of my papers, starting with one which appeared in 1935,⁵ if a patient has a psi occurrence (be it in the form of a dream of the night before or in that of a fantasy he may have during the analytic session, or otherwise), the analyst is always involved, although he is regularly unaware of *his own* contribution to the occurrence until its elements have been recognized, scrutinized and connected with each other.

The experiments with LSD or psilocybin,⁶ presented a very different picture. There was plenty of awareness, I daresay, on the part of the experimenters, whereas the subjects were in that particular state, typical of people who are under the influence of hallucinogens, where awareness seems to be exalted (although distorted) on one side and

more or less strongly dimmed or abolished on another side. It was quite obvious to me, as well as to the other experimenters, that whatever came on the conscious level to our subjects was the end-result of processes and mechanisms of which they were totally unaware and completely unable to control. The "tightness" of the experimental setting was such, that the parapsychological results were quite meager, as those who have read the Cavanna-Servadio monograph know well, but the psychological and psycho-pharmacological observations we could make were of great importance.

It seems to me that by now, a point has been demonstrated, i.e., that so far as our customary, Western or westernized parapsychological research is concerned, the usual, daily state of awareness is not favorable for the production of evidence of psi occurrences, and that, conversely, the latter seem to take place more often when awareness is submitted to different degrees of diminution. The result of this ascertainment is both curious and disappointing; it is curious, because, whereas it appears fairly evident that a certain degree of psi must be present in practically everybody (we might say, in every Tom Jones or John Smith), its coming to light does occur when the self-mastery, or self-recognition, or awareness, of Tom Jones or John Smith is either diminished, or distorted, or no longer there. The disappointment comes from the sad admission that, probably, our hope to consider, to assess, to someday classify psi phenomena in the same fashion as we do in other scientific realms (for example, in natural sciences) is vain, and that all our efforts in this sense are doomed to failure.

In his valuable survey of some twenty different states of consciousness, Stanley Krippner⁷ mentions some particular conditions, which we might consider in opposition to those described so far. They would seem to represent the other side of the coin, and to be characterized by a *plus* instead of by a *minus* awareness. Krippner briefly describes meditative states, internal scanning, and what he generally calls "expanded conscious states." Here, however, I would like to differentiate between states where "expansion" is not or is hardly controlled by the ego of the subjects (such as in hypnotic or in drug-induced conditions), and those states where expansion and awareness go hand in hand. We may well adopt the term which Krippner uses, i.e., "integral level," to indicate those states that have been variously called by different authors: "Satori," "oceanic unity," "peak experiences," "cosmic consciousness," and otherwise.

Now it is well known to experts, and also to many lay people, that progress toward the attainment of the "integral level" is regularly accompanied by parapsychic or parapsychical occurrences. Scores of

hagiographic books in the West and a very large Eastern literature, have reported "phenomena" which allegedly were manifested by a number of saints, seers and mystics in the Western hemisphere; by yogis, rishees and mahatmas in India; by adepts and initiates in the Far East and practically all over the world. Because of their more spectacular characteristics, parapsychical phenomena are very often quoted, seemingly representing the bulk of many so-called "miracles" performed by this or that saint, or manifestations of supernormal "powers" in the case of yogis, fakirs or Mohammedan saintly men. Suffice to recall the purported bilocations of Saint Anthony of Padua, the innumerable levitations of Saint Joseph of Copertino, the many instantaneous cures performed by Saint Salvatore of Horta. In my country, and in our day, much has been said and published about a Franciscan friar, the late Father Pius of Pietrelcina, who seemed to have uncanny ESP gifts, and also other alleged endowments such as bilocation and healing powers. On my first visit to Father Pius, in 1937, I personally had a curious hallucinatory experience. Having left him and gone back to the peasant house where I had found hospitality, I suddenly perceived an intense perfume of incense, but could easily ascertain that no incense was being burned in the place or in its surroundings. This hallucination (the first and only occurrence of its kind in my whole life) lasted about two minutes and ceased abruptly. A friend of mine, who was near me, felt absolutely nothing. I am still questioning myself regarding the state of awareness in which I was at the time. I had been deeply impressed by my encounter with the saintly man. We were in the month of May, the time was rather early in the afternoon. The window was open, it was sunny and warm outside and in the room. My friend was lying on a bed, trying to allow himself a little siesta. I was sitting on a chair, silent, and reflecting on our venture. I certainly was in a rather peculiar state of mind, and it seems very likely that my hallucination (whether it could be called a psi phenomenon I still do not know) was connected with an unusual condition of *minus* awareness.

But to go back to the field of *plus* awareness. A notable amount of literature, concerning religious experiences and their relation to parapsychology, can be consulted by those who want to know more about the subject. It goes from some books by Father Thurston⁸ to the valuable contributions of Sir Alister Hardy,⁹ not to speak of the already mentioned and above quoted hagiographic books and accounts. Remembering the famous work by Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige* ("The Holy", 1917), Sir Alister Hardy contends that in Otto's concept, the feeling of the holy is not "equivalent to emotion, but . . . a form of

awareness that is neither that of ordinary perceiving nor of ordinary conceiving; in fact it is clear . . . although he did not use the expression, that he thought of it as a form of extrasensory perception."

This may well be, but one fact is both certain and obvious, i.e., that those people who are the usual subjects of the "holy" (also called the "numinous") are hardly in a condition that could be investigated with parapsychological tools, even if those subjects were inclined to accept a scientific investigation, which is very seldom the case. Strong aversion to paranormal phenomena that occurred to them has been shown by a number of Catholic saints. Saint Theresa of Avila was deeply annoyed by her levitations, which she considered a scandal for her Carmelitan nuns. Saint Joseph of Copertino was ashamed of his levitations, and when he came back to his usual state of mind after his raptures, he used to say in an apologetic tone: "I have dozed a little, please forgive me." Father Pius did not like at all the fact that people should smell perfumes around him, and went so far as to sprinkle some chlorine in his cell, in order to counterbalance the impression! Many more examples could be quoted, all pointing to the same conclusion: trying to carry out serious parapsychological research on people who are purported to attain a *plus* state of awareness would be an almost futile attempt. Conditions for true research are regularly absent. The subjects, moreover, are usually unwilling to lend themselves to proper investigation.

The picture we now get if we consider Eastern traditions and phenomena is not very different. I will take Yoga as an example, because I am more familiar with this famous Indian system and set of techniques than with any other aspect of Oriental tradition. In general, one can safely say that there is a consensus of Indian thought about the possibility of acquiring supernormal powers. In the third book of the *Yogasūtra* by Patañjali (who is still considered the basic authority on Yoga),¹⁰ one finds descriptions of several *siddhis*, or occult powers, which the practitioner can obtain through certain practices. While I have to simply refer to the aforesaid classical text for details, I wish to quote to a somewhat larger extent what Patañjali and his main commentator, Vyāsa, think of the yogi who would be tempted to become proud of such paranormal achievements. In Sutra 52, Book 3, of the *Yogasūtra*, he mentions the yogi who, according to Vyāsa, has reached the "stage of honey," i.e., the stage where his mind is in absolute control of all sensory perceptions and can withdraw from them all at will. At this stage, he may listen to the "celestial temptations" of some gods, who would tell him to use his powers in order to conquer women, to remain young and make all sorts of enchantments and

wonders. A true yogi should not do so, it is said; nay, he should go on detaching himself from *all* sensory objects. Only thus “everything he has achieved will be reinforced, while all he has still to achieve comes nearer and nearer.” In fact, after the “stage of honey,” two more stages have to be reached: one is, obtaining the light of knowledge; the fourth and last is, transcending every possible previous achievement.

I remember that after listening to a paper by Dr. Jamunā Prasād, at the Twenty-second International Conference of the Parapsychology Foundation (London, 1973), I asked him if I was right in saying that the final aim of Yoga (either of the classical, or Tantric, or Buddhistic school) was *not* the pursuit or possession of paranormal powers. Dr. Prasād was in complete agreement, and said that such powers, if any, were considered as simple by-products by serious practitioners.

I do not think it is too bold to extend this view to several other Eastern traditions, such as Sufism, or Zen. Even nowadays—and I am mainly thinking of India again—men who appear to perform wonders are usually frowned upon by ascetics and mahatmas, to the extent that some of these (Sai Baba for example) used to say that they perform their wonders without thinking twice about them and considering them of little or no importance. Usually, just as Western mystics do, they do not lend themselves to scientific investigation, saying that such an approach has nothing in common with what they are aiming at. Dr. Prasād himself said, during the discussion of his London paper:¹¹ “For the last two years now, we have been trying to do a longitudinal study of those who practice yoga and to see at what stage they develop these powers, and it has been very difficult for me to pursue the studies with those who practice yoga, to agree to be subjects for our study.” And later on: “. . . the real yogis are very few and even when they are found, they do not agree to be subjects for empirical or experimental studies.”

We all know, of course, that some yogis *did* lend themselves to some kind of experimental investigation, such as EEG, measurement of basal metabolism, electrocardiograms, changes in bodily temperature, etc. However, I do not think that, by such experiments, we have gained much parapsychological knowledge. Not unlike our mediums, who are hardly able to tell us exactly what they have experienced when they come out of their trance-states or other states of *minus* awareness, those who attain states of *plus* awareness are also unable to give us much information about their personal experiences, the actual contents of their psychologically expanded condition and, last but not least, the connections between *plus* awareness and the possible occurrence of psi phenomena. Many of their descriptions have poetical beauty, very few mention psi phenomena with any amount of precision and practically

no one has given us any information which we could consider scientifically valid and an addition to our parapsychological knowledge.

If I may draw some conclusions from this rapid excursion, they would be the following:

1. The study of states of awareness has *per se* a very great psychological and scientific value. Indirectly, it may give us plenty of help in our parapsychological endeavors.

2. *Minus* states of awareness can be the premises of many psi phenomena, although they can hardly be controlled, or directly investigated, which gives us little or no hope of establishing precise connections and classifications of the phenomena of which one or the other state could be the matrix.

3. *Plus* states of awareness are much less promising as possible fields of parapsychological research. A "peak experience" or a blissful *samādhi* are as closed territories as a deep trance condition. Moreover, the subjects of such states pursue other aims and care little or nothing at all for our kind of research.

If these conclusions should seem too pessimistic, let me quote the following lines by Eileen J. Garrett, who was certainly a subject of many *minus* and of many *plus* experiences. It will not come as a surprise to anyone to learn that they are taken from a book called *Awareness*:¹² "Among all our psychological faculties, awareness is the capacity for cognizance. As such it transcends the limitations which time and space impose upon the senses, and is able to gather experience in areas of being which the senses can never reach. Its nature is to poise, like a hunting hawk, ready to be sent abroad in any direction, to impale the attractive fact, idea, or event, and to bring back to the consciousness the trophy of its flight. It can move in any and all three of the dimensions of consciousness represented by memory, the senses, and imagination, and when controlled by the will, its efficiency can become a creative force in the individual life.

"If, briefly, we shut out all sensory intrusions, and focus awareness upon our inner selves, we shall acquire a sense of the dark and featureless vitality that moves in our bodies. And if, then, we ask ourselves, 'What do I most want in this world and this life?' we shall experience the flight of the hawk—sensations created by awareness moving to find the answer. This movement may be in either of two directions, but not in the third. If we have thought constructively of this idea before, awareness may move into memory to find the answer; but if the question is not repetitive, awareness will make its flight toward the open spaces of inspiration. It may not bring back the answer, for the

question is deep and subtle; but if we continue to sustain our resistance to sensory intrusions, and keep perception centered on the hawk, we shall perceive at least the direction in which inspiration lies, and undoubtedly the first creative stirrings of response."

The above lines seem to me to give a perfect idea of what a true, all-comprising parapsychological mentality could and should be!

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DISCUSSION

HONORTON: I have been studying Patāñjali Yoga-sūtras for the last four years or so, and I think that perhaps the most effective way to utilize this type of material is not to search out advanced practitioners of Yoga, but rather to use Patāñjali and the like as a source of ideas for experiments. I was struck, when I first encountered Patāñjali's Yoga-sūtras, by the degree to which the eight limbs or stages of his Yoga system fit in with what seemed to be coming out of the laboratory in terms of progressive systematic reduction of distraction, starting with the grosser distractions from the body and through desire to the

more subtle ones and then finally, the three final stages which Patānjali refers to as *samyāma* which is, according to Patānjali, the process through which paranormal powers are most frequently manifested. You might be interested to know that our original idea for the ganzfeld was to use it as a way of crudely approximating *samyāma*, a kind of experimental *samyāma*. What we tried to do was to have the subject in ganzfeld go through a progressive relaxation procedure and then listen as an object of concentration to an intermittent tone that would come on at random intervals between three seconds and three minutes. During this time we were monitoring the subject's EEG by movements and muscle tension activity, and the tone came on intermittently for a period of about twenty minutes and then, unknown to the subject, the tone was no longer physically available, but was presented to an experimenter in another room. We hoped through this procedure to see if the objective concentration could be used as a way to lock the subject's attention so as to detect psi interactions. Unfortunately, we were using gross polygraph methods of evaluation and we weren't able to get very far with the physiological aspects of it at that time, but we hope to go back to it now with more sophisticated techniques.

SERVADIO: Have you published this yet?

HONORTON: No.

SERVADIO: I quite agree with you on your first remark. Many times, I've said in India and elsewhere this approach to Yoga in that particular sense was almost futile.

HONORTON: If you're looking for a conceptual system that makes sense of parapsychological phenomena, it's in Patānjali.

PARKER: I wasn't too happy with your distinction between plus and minus states of awareness. If you take experiences such as psychedelic experiences, hypnosis, possession states, etc., what determines whether they're experienced in a positive way or a negative way often depends on the situation the person is in and the help he's given with the experience. So I don't think you can necessarily characterize one particular state of consciousness as being a plus state and another one as being a minus.

SERVADIO: Yes, I could agree with that. I have asked myself a semantic question: what do we really mean by "awareness" and what do we mean by "consciousness"? In old time psychology we were making a distinction between perception and apperception, and apperception was a concept much nearer to what I feel should be that of awareness.

Awareness is to establish a certain survey on what is going on in ourselves. That seems to me the right semantic sense of the word "awareness." That is why I stuck to the term "awareness" in my paper and I never used "altered states of consciousness," because I really think that the two concepts should be distinguished. And so I don't think that the hypnotic state is a state of awareness. It's an altered state of consciousness.

STRAUCH: I was struck by your analysis of the psychoanalytic situation where the therapist is aware of the minus state. It occurred to me that maybe this feature, aside from the hypothesis that psi occurs in everybody all the time, is one of the most important reasons why psi phenomena are so frequently observed in the psychoanalytic setting, as compared to experimental settings where the participants usually do not share these states.

SERVADIO: This is a relatively new question, and as Jan Ehrenwald would say, in many more analysts there is now a certain doctrinal compliance, because more and more analysts accept that these things *could* happen. Up to twenty or thirty years ago, the majority of analysts were saying "this has never happened to me" (and I heard this sentence many times), because they were not prepared to acknowledge the phenomena.

SARGENT: I was really intrigued to read that quote from Freud. I've never seen that. That is really very interesting and fits into our ideas very nicely. Now on the minus and plus states of awareness, you say "Where are the mediums of old?" First of all, I'm not entirely sure as to where that comes into the argument. Perhaps you can help me on that. And the second thing is, I think in the last few years we have seen a resurgence not of mediumship, but of gifted subjects. We have seen the PK people, but we have also seen Harribance, we've seen Malcolm Bessent and we have seen Bill Delmore. They're not mediums because we now live in an age in which spiritualism and the idea of spirits surviving is no longer one that is perhaps socially in favor, so now Uri Geller tells us that he has a UFO up there instead of a control spirit. That's maybe why we don't have mediums, but I think we still have gifted people.

SERVADIO: Yes, I think you're right, but I think that this is a comparatively recent occurrence. One point that has always intrigued me is the different historical phases of parapsychology. There was the phase of great mediumship. Then there was a phase where there was

almost nothing. Then there was a phase where everyone was working with Zener cards and, fortunately, there are now these gifted subjects.

EHRENWALD: Like Emilio Servadio, I have sometimes been wondering about the semantics of the difference between "minus functions" or minus states versus "plus states" or plus functions. For instance, what is a minus state in Western culture is more likely to be regarded as a plus state in an Eastern culture which does not focus attention on the here and now, but on a timeless, egoless, spiritual reality. Also we have to realize that when the ego is in abeyance, e.g., during sleep, we are dealing with a minus function on one level of experience only. It could be argued that there is, on another level, a concurrent tendency to a plus state, to a compensation of the minus state. Actually, I believe that in the parapsychological situation we may have a percipient in the minus state, with an agent in the plus state functioning as his opposite number. Thus the two processes, perception and agency, are in effect intertwined. Their interaction involves both minus function and plus function at the same time. I submit that, as a general rule, several levels of personality are involved. Neurologically speaking, the left hemisphere may relinquish its predominance, with the right hemisphere assuming temporary control and vice versa. We must, therefore, be aware of the limitations of value judgments. Another question Dr. Servadio touched upon is a major challenge to the psychopharmacologists. It concerns the effect of drugs. We take it for granted that LSD, psilocybin or some other psychedelic agent tends to depress cognitive and sensory functions. But does it really do so? Does it not cause occasional hyperfunctions on the sensory level, for instance, in hallucinatory experiences? Still, Servadio and Cavanna have found that they do not increase the yield of psi phenomena. Psychoactive drugs are by no means the royal road towards achieving more psi. We have to realize that on trying to hit a target area in the brain with pharmacological weapons, we are still proceeding by trial and error. I know of no drug that would selectively increase—or depress—the activity of the right versus the left hemisphere, to say nothing of the reticular formation in the brain stem. In short, I think it is the interpersonal relationship between the experimenter and the subject and not chemistry which is decisive in psi research. Remember, for instance, Pahnke's observation that when psilocybin was given to the subject in a church setting there were mystical experiences, whereas when given in a mental hospital setting, a patient (who was, to begin with, schizophrenic) got more schizophrenic than before.

SERVADIO: I certainly have not much to object to what you said. I

know only too well that the distinction between minus and plus awareness is very relative and it is artificial. But it was just a scheme I used to make myself understood. Now regarding the cultural conditioning, we are all culturally conditioned and I can freely admit that I am perhaps leaning on the Oriental cultural condition more than on the Western one. Regarding the drugs, after the experiments we made in Rome, the results of which were published in 1964, I did not do those experiments again because I was rather disappointed, not only because of the effort, the time they take and the meager results, but also because I know that other experiments of the same kind did not give good results. I quite agree not only with you, but with Freud, that drugs could be very useful for other purposes and Freud put this quite clearly in his *Summary of Psychoanalysis*. He said at that time (it was 1939 when the book was published), "Some day we will perhaps have drugs that will help us in our investigations, but so far we haven't got them." Now we are starting to get them, so this use could be much more profitable than trying to use drugs for parapsychological investigation. You spoke of the famous Pahnke experiment with students, but he used psilocybin, not LSD.

TART: I'd like to add something on the problems of using the words "plus" and "minus" functions, because I think they have an unintended effect, namely, the result of the value judgments that go with it. When we talk about awareness, I'm afraid we usually talk about conformance to consensus reality standards. If you interpret what's happening the way everyone else has been trained to, we call that good "reality" contact. In something like a drug experience, we get variations on that and while we need to describe those variations, I'm very wary of bringing in the evaluative words like "plus" and "minus" at any point. We should talk descriptively about the changes which might or might not lead to something useful.

It's also very difficult to talk, with much authority, about what we've learned so far from the use of psychedelic drugs to effect psi because there have been only a very few experiments. Most of those have been with relatively naive subjects who, I believe, spent most of their time coping with the novelty and stress of their accustomed consensus reality falling to pieces and so had very little awareness—if I can use that term more neutrally—left to even begin to focus on the psi task. I know you didn't intend to put value judgments in, but the words "plus" and "minus," I'm afraid, create trouble.

SERVADIO: It can give this impression, also that "minus" is something inferior.

TART: To the analyst, to use your example, who simply tries to listen without evaluation, I would say, "Oh, obviously that is a plus function." He's not trying to automatically evaluate by cultural standards, but by being more open-minded, he's listening to what's there. So you can see the semantic problems it creates.

HONORTON: It seems to me that when you talk of awareness in your paper, you are talking about dualistic awareness—subject/object differentiation. Certainly, Patānjali, in describing the process of samyāma, presents it as a state where consciousness or awareness is coupled to the object, where there is total absorption, total diminution of subject/object interaction and this would seem to be consistent with a variety of experimental and impressionistic reports. Is there anyone in this room who has observed a successful psi performance where the subject is very clearly in an ego-oriented state? I doubt it very much. And here is another very clear parallel with biofeedback, the concept of passive volition, where the subject in biofeedback initially usually does worse than his baseline performance. And so the feedback performance is used as a focus of attention rather than as a task where the subject "forgets himself" and just let's it happen.

SERVADIO: Well, you would call that a state of expanded awareness, wouldn't you?

HONORTON: Well, again, I think "expanded" has the same problem as "plus" and "minus" does. I really think that what you talk about here is dualistic awareness. A clear separation of self from environment.

TART: It would be simpler if we talked about *altered* awareness and then, as a separate comment, whether we like it or not.

SARGENT: Chuck just asked if anybody had seen a subject do well when he was ego-oriented. The answer to that is the best forced choice performance I've ever seen with my machine test. It was done by a subject who, on nights that he was going to do well, said, "Will you buy me a drink if I get you a two-standard deviation result?" I said, "Yes, I'll buy you a drink if you get a two-standard deviation result, but I know you won't get it." I knew him well enough to challenge him. And he was suitably stunned, so he produced me a three-standard deviation result and he was very ego-oriented indeed. He was so ego-oriented that when I was trying to give him feedback every 100 trials during a 500-trial run, at one point he told me to shut up because the feedback worried him. That's very ego-oriented, very aggressive, a tremendously high arousal state and that was a very outstanding performance.

But I don't think he was task-oriented either. He had his mind on that glass of beer and he was going to get it. He got three afterwards.

EHRENWALD: Well, we are dealing here again with a minor semantic problem—what is meant by ego-oriented? The emphasis in this case should be, in my view, on the subject's motivation. You managed to increase his motivation enormously, because it became part of your interpersonal relationship. Maybe he wanted to please you, or to challenge you. Or he just wanted to get his drinks. In any case, you offered him feedback; he was motivated to oblige, regardless of what his ego state was like. He took the bait, and he produced "doctrinal compliance." Another aspect of semantic difficulties is when we talk in the psychoanalytic situation about the therapist's and the patient's "regression in the service of treatment." Of course, regression, from the viewpoint of the analytic observer, is a minus state, a return to a level of a more infantile functioning. But you can also argue that it is a situation in which hidden resources of personality are coming to the fore again. So we have to understand in what sense we use the term "minus function."

SERVADIO: The great danger is, again, that of giving a moralistic evaluation to a term. As for regression, for instance, every time we go to sleep we regress in some way, but this is very good for our health. Regression in the service of the Ego is a very well known psychological function which has been described very beautifully in art, art production, creativity.

PLAYFAIR: You said "Where are the mediums of old?" I would like to counter by asking "Where are the scientific researchers of yesterday?" When the SPR was founded, it published thousands of pages in its first twenty years of marvelous original research gathered first hand by people like Myers, Hodgson and Feilding, who would travel hundreds of miles to track down a medium or a poltergeist. But today, ESP has come to stand for Extermination of Spontaneous Phenomena. Mediums such as Edgar Cayce were never properly investigated by anybody at all. There he was in the United States for forty years and, apart from one extremely clumsy attempt, no researcher even went to see him. Here in Europe we have people like Edgar Devaux, who has allegedly performed clairvoyance just as impressive as Croiset's, yet, as far as I know, nobody except Hans Bender has been near him. Here in France we have the healer Alalouf, who has been going for years and doing all kinds of amazing things. Again, apart from one inconclusive article in *Planète* about fifteen years ago, there has been nothing.

I had an experience myself last year. As a non-scientist, of course, there's no point in my investigating anything because nobody is going to believe me. Anyway, I did discover a metal bender and I took her to the man I thought was the right person to study her, and he simply said "I'm too busy for that kind of thing. Come back in three months."

Are scientists afraid of mediums? Do they resent them? Or do they wish they were doing something other than what they are doing? Couldn't you all take the hint from Targ and Puthoff in *Mind Reach*, where they make the point that researchers should find out what a medium *can* do, not try and make him do something he may not want to do? I don't mean this personally—your own research with rural Italian healers was very valuable—but could you explain why this state of affairs exists?

SERVADIO: Perhaps one idea, and I don't say it is a good idea, is that several of these people are supposed to be professional people and not just the kind of people who accept the idea of being investigated. But, nevertheless, I agree with you that in spite of all, they should be tested to see if, in spite of the fact that they may be professional and make a living out of these alleged faculties, they could be useful to our research. I myself have, in the past, approached two or three of these exceptional subjects. I was not afraid of them at all.

HONORTON: To respond briefly to your question, "Where are the investigators of days gone by?" I would like to return a question: "Where are the independently wealthy investigators of days gone by?" Those people were all able to travel around the world without having to worry about where the funding would come for it. I'm not afraid of mediums. I certainly am willing to work with anyone who has special abilities and try to adapt experimental procedures as appropriate, but I'm going to say something that I think is probably not very popular right now, but I think it will become increasingly popular as years go by and that is, what have we learned about the processes involved in psi phenomena from the exceptionally powerful mediums and gifted subjects? Not very much. I think what little we think we know about psi phenomena has come primarily from studies involving larger numbers of relatively unselected people, which permits the kinds of generalizations that cannot be made on the basis of someone who has exceptional talent.

SERVADIO: I know of only one exception—Eileen Garrett.

HONORTON: Yes.

SARGENT: I did some work with a psychometrist for the British Broadcasting Corporation not long ago, and she was very amenable to working with pictorial targets that were concealed inside envelopes. She was guessing the age and sex and I analyzed data straight and for displacement, because in a pilot procedure she seemed to have some nice cross matches. I got my ubiquitous minus one effect and she was willing to work, so I studied her. But I've got to agree with Chuck, she couldn't say anything. She came up with the usual things—just her feelings. And there were some very impressive things. One of the sets of photographs that had been prepared contained one of me, and she just put this one down, (we don't open them until the end) and she suddenly turned to me and said, "Get out of my mind." The only time she said that. On the other hand, I got a letter from somebody after the radio program. He has out-of-body states and he will demonstrate for a few quid, and there are a lot of people like that, but to such people I'm not even going to write back. But if I do have mediums who will work with me as she did, then I will. But as Chuck said, what do you learn?

GERSTEN: I disagree with both of you. I think that many things were learned from the mediums, for example, the fact that electromagnetic waves are not responsible for telepathy. We are learning about new surprising phenomena mostly from gifted mediums. With the gifted mediums one can do some measurements which I hope can shed some light on the enlarged domain of the physical reality which was previously referred to by LeShan. I do not think we can learn much about this from ungifted persons.