CLOSING REMARKS

HOYT EDGE: Parapsychology or psychical research was the first empirical discipline to study the survival question. We have continued this research for over a century. During that time there has been an enormous amount of empirical and conceptual work. But even after all of this time and effort, we often have to respond, as John Palmer did, "The older we get or the more we think about this question, the more confused we get."

One thing that came out of the conference is that most people on the panel believe that we have reached a stalemate in trying to answer the question of survival. Robert Almeder seems to be the only person on the panel to be fairly convinced by the data, although he doesn't seem altogether happy about the prospect of survival. Others, like Madelaine Lawrence, were impressed by the personal reports of others and are thus concerned that we take these experiences seriously.

There has been unanimous agreement that the survival question is one of the most fundamental in life. Yet, no one has expressed much disappointment if it turns out that survival is not proven. This strikes me as a fundamental difference in philosophy of life, certainly from 100 years ago, but also perhaps even from 15 to 20 years ago.

While there is much disagreement on some matters, such as on the ontology of a survival self (Palmer suggests a dualist version while Roll offers a more monist version), if we look carefully, I think we will see that many of the panelists' views form patterns of agreement in other areas. As a way of summing up the conference, let me mention four of these patterns. Of course, these four clusters of ideas will only skim the surface. But it may be useful, nevertheless, to emphasize these points.

First, in order to break through the stalemate, a number of the participants have argued that we need to improve our understanding of various aspects of the survival question. John Palmer has urged more theory-building so that we can get conceptual clarity about alternatives. And he has offered us a dualist theory. Michael Grosso has urged us to widen our net, and seriously consider states of consciousness and experiences that may have psi components but which we ordinarily don't look at, such as transpersonal experiences and UFO experiences.

Justine Owens and Stephen Braude have advised us to examine more closely alternative explanations to survival as a way to get a clearer picture of the appropriateness of explaining certain events by survival. Owens, for instance, recommends that we need to find out more about the processing capacities of an unconscious brain and about the predictability of information gathered in OBE experiences based on normal experience. Braude argues that we need more insightful and detailed descriptions of purported reincarnation cases as well as of dissociative processes before we can be justified in believing that the data supports reincarnation.

Second, there was concern that we start our discussion of survival with the focus on the experiences of the living. Bill Roll argued that if we understand the everyday self, we see that it is relational, encompassing others and the world, being embodied and emplaced. At the death of the small self, the larger relational Self can survive, he says, in a primordial body. On the other hand, Eugene Taylor, Madelaine Lawrence, and Justine Owens focus on more extraordinary experience, the latter two on near-death experiences (although we all seem to agree that this appellation is a misnomer) and Taylor more on visionary experiences.

Third, several participants have urged us to pay more attention to the transformative effects of psi experiences. People who go through near-death experiences, Lawrence points out, tend to view death and in turn life in radically new ways. Eugene Taylor, on the other hand, believes that there has been a gross overemphasis on the scientific reductionistic methodology. And as a corrective we need to develop a psychology of inner experience which describes as sensitively as possible visionary and self-realization experiences, among others. Psi phenomena have traditionally been a by-product of these experiences.

Fourth, the old question of super-psi is still with us. There is disagreement on its usability. Robert Almeder dismisses it as being nonfalsifiable and as providing no real explanation, while Stephen Braude argues that it, or a version of it, is a useful potential explanation given the present state of the data. And Bill Roll suggests that we should perhaps not even use the term at all.

Well, let me conclude with the following observation. We have heard earlier that we can achieve progress when we reach a higher

level of confusion. I think we have reached that stage! But given the philosophical and empirical complexity of the survival question, perhaps that is all we can ask for at this time. I believe we have made progress over the last century, but there is still much work to be done in this area. Does this suggest another conference on this topic in 20 years?

LISETTE COLY: I think you really pulled a fast one, Hoyt, with that last question. If you would all come back and update your positions, I'm sure that Parapsychology Foundation would be most interested in yet another survival conference. The last two days have really flown by. Your papers and discussions have raised much food for thought and continued research on the subject. The Parapsychology Foundation thanks you all, participants and observers, who've come together and shed so much new light on our subject matter and helped to create this valuable addition to our conference series.

Now, I believe we all must thank Dr. Hoyt Edge for a job well done! It is no mean feat to moderate a conference such as ours, particularly when so much of our discussion is given over to spirited discussion. That's what it is, basically, excuse the pun. And I think this elegant summary and instant replay that Hoyt has prepared somewhat under the gun is really a marvel! We do thank you.

As we close these proceedings, I would like to share with you additional comments made by Eileen Garrett (1957) concerning survival research.

> That we have the scientific mechanisms for such exploration is true. The place of applied science is recognized, but what is needed for the new communication are explorers with imagination, persistence and curiosity...There is an unspoken taboo...against discussing man's hope for life beyond death in objective terms. The scholar's disdain, the self-conscious intellectual's too-quick smile, and the minister's rolling phrases respect that taboo. They avoid rather than face the issue; they are designed to head off the unsophisticated questioner, the sincere investigator, the truly perplexed. (p. 2)

We have been most fortunate to have at this conference explorers obviously possessing imagination, persistence and curiosity. We feel

sure that the unsophisticated questioner, the sincere investigator and the truly perplexed will be well served to read of our efforts here in Boston. We wish you all a safe trip home.

Ladies and gentlemen, the 40th International Conference of the Parapsychology Foundation is adjourned.

Reference

Garrett, E.J. (Ed.). (1957). *Does man survive death? A symposium.* New York: Helix Press.