

PARAPSYCHOLOGY IN THE MASS MEDIA

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I think that it would be best to begin by telling you where I stand and something about my background so that you can weigh personal bias and experience, and put the remainder of my remarks in the proper perspective.

I am a strict materialist in outlook. I am a rationalist or at least I try very hard to be one. By training I'm a journalist and I have spent the bulk of my career writing and editing science material for the general public. I have researched and written a fair amount in that broad and ill-defined area that has been called, among other things, parapsychology.

It is an old cliché for a journalist to play the tough guy. Many of those who have written popular books on psychic subjects say that they too started out as tough-minded skeptics, but as they looked more deeply into the subject they became convinced. This change has not taken place in my case. I remain quite unconvinced by the evidence that has been put forward so far. I have even picked up a small reputation as an opponent of parapsychology. But I would like to believe that I have not closed my mind about the subject, or for that matter about any subject.

I am still interested in psychical phenomena for several reasons. The obvious one is that if the theories put forth by the parapsychologists are true, the importance of the discovery is staggering, and would probably overthrow the whole materialistic view of the world that has been built up over the past several hundred years. Some of the evidence that has been put forward is intriguing and difficult (though not impossible) to explain from a materialistic point of view. But as a professional journalist I am also interested in parapsychology because I know that it makes a good story, and that lots of other people will be interested as well.

Criticism of research in parapsychology can be offered by others more

qualified than myself. What I wish to discuss is the problems faced by those seriously interested in the subject, in getting their information or point of view through to the general public, and why there is so much misunderstanding concerning what parapsychology is all about.

I must point out here that what I have to say about the mass media coverage of parapsychology concerns the United States specifically because it is the only country that I am well acquainted with. I suspect, however, that many of the same problems are present, to a greater or lesser degree, in most Western countries.

Occasionally I have heard charges that there is some sort of a conspiracy on the part of the mass media "establishment" to suppress news of parapsychology and other subjects on the fringes of scientific respectability. There is admittedly a certain reluctance on the part of segments of the media to handle subjects that are considered on the fringe. I'll discuss some of the reasons for this a little later on. You must also realize that what appears to be an important or newsworthy piece of information to you may look quite insignificant to the working journalist. But the charge that there is any conspiracy, organized or informal, to suppress news is utter nonsense. These are rather paranoid times that we live in and charges of conspiracy pop up frequently.

The amount of coverage that parapsychology and closely related subjects get in the press and on television is quite remarkable, particularly if you class parapsychology as an area of scientific investigation. There is simply not that much news generated in the field during a year. There are not scores of well-financed parapsychology institutions conducting a broad range of experiments which are coming up with exciting and newsworthy results. The few parapsychology groups and researchers can hardly afford large departments of public relations men who will flood reporters with press releases, and offer them gentle bribes in the way of free lunches and fancy press junkets.

Rather than having to court the media, like most sciences are forced to do, parapsychologists are often in the position of being courted by the media. Newspapers, magazines and television are hungry for news of parapsychology because they know that is something that their readers and viewers want. The subject sells magazines and books and boosts the rating of TV shows. The result is that journalists are often tempted to inflate a story, making news where none or very little exists.

On a number of occasions editors have asked me if there was anything new in the parapsychology field. They were willing to settle for almost anything at all. What they wanted was a news peg, however small, upon which to hang a story, or even a headline. All too often they will simply hang the headline anyway, with nothing to back it up.

Titles such as *Science Proves You Can See the Future* appear with predictable regularity in some of the more sensational publications. And millions pay to read such baseless and really silly stories.

The result is that while parapsychology receives wide coverage, the coverage is not of a very high quality. Parapsychology reporting has not yet left the era of what we call "Sunday supplement science," although the Sunday supplements themselves have largely disappeared from the scene. Since it is the media that inform the public it is hardly surprising that public knowledge of the state of psychical research is wide, but not very deep.

I have never seen any survey figures, but I would suspect that the majority of the American public believe that something they might call ESP, has been proved "scientifically." I would also venture to guess that more Americans know the name of Dr. J. B. Rhine than that of, say, Dr. Enrico Fermi.

But what does this easy access to publicity and wide recognition really mean? If you are a show business personality it means a great deal, because publicity is your life's blood. If you are a person seriously engaged in a search for the truth this sort of publicity is not only useless, it can be quite harmful. It tends to lump you in with the show business people, and the public, though it may listen to you, perhaps even believe you, will not necessarily take you seriously.

The American television networks have done a considerable number of specials on psychical subjects. These have been, almost without exception, disasters. The programs provided some low grade entertainment, but they did not provide any real enlightenment, nor were they intended to. But, as a result, psychical research is firmly identified in the minds of the television viewing public with such showmen as Hans Holzer and Peter Hurkos. The people who produce such shows regard them as entertainment rather than television journalism. People that I have talked to in the TV field will hedge a bit about presenting something scientific, but basically they admit that what they want is something sensational, something entertaining. These same men would not treat a show about cancer, space travel or air pollution so lightly. The fact is that these men do not believe there is any particular harm in doing a bad job because they do not believe that the subject of psychical research is very significant.

It is a little sobering to realize that flying saucers, another subject that has been on the fringes of scientific respectability, actually received better treatment on television than parapsychology ever has. Only the educational television network has made any attempts to treat parapsychology with respect, and unfortunately most people do not watch educational television.

Radio no longer counts for much as a medium of public information in the United States. The public does not respond to something that it has heard on the radio in the same way it does to something it has seen on TV. But parapsychology probably gets its best break from radio. This is because of the discussion shows. TV discussion or "talk" shows reach a far wider audience, but they are strictly for entertainment (if one is entertained by such things). Producers of the TV talk shows have a very low opinion of their viewers' intelligence. They assume that viewers are interested only in celebrities and that the viewer has an attention span that does not exceed three minutes. The producers may be right, for the formula has been well received.

Radio discussion shows cannot do this because they do not have the money to hire the celebrities. Since many hours of airtime must be filled, fruitful and significant exchanges of ideas are occasionally allowed to develop. But even there the emphasis is on entertainment. To get an entertaining show the producers try to provide a lively "mix" of guests. The proper mix for a show on parapsychology seems to be one skeptic, one believer and one crackpot. I think this is indicative of the low regard in which the subject of parapsychology is held by the producers of such shows.

The situation in the newspapers is also unfortunate. The influential papers, like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* rarely cover the subject of parapsychology. The ranking of newspapers in the United States is such that the mere presence of a story in a paper like the *New York Times* immediately makes it a matter for serious discussion. I believe it was the fact that the *Times* chose to put a story about the late Bishop Pike's reported contact with his dead son on the front page that made the story appear so very important. The evidence uncovered in the televised séance itself was hardly overwhelming, and the film was not widely shown on U.S. television. Newspapers and commentators all over the country picked up their information from the *Times* story.

Smaller papers print stories on psychic subjects fairly regularly. But again I ask, what does this mean for public understanding? These papers will print the predictions of a person like Jeane Dixon, or the ravings of any publicity hunting "psychic" who has claimed to have solved the latest sensational murder. Often the reporting of these stories is done tongue-in-cheek, and is meant to have a double effect. To the unsophisticated true believer, the story says, "Here is yet another proof of what you already believe." To the sophisticated doubter the writer is saying, "Isn't it dumb that anyone would ever believe such nonsense." This sort of double-edged journalism is quite common, and I believe thoroughly detestable, because it allows the writer to exploit

the subject, and still not take any responsibility for the sort of information he is spreading about.

If there is a genuine piece of news—let us say the appearance of a poltergeist phenomenon—even then the newspapers will rarely do a thorough investigative job. Rather than send a science reporter or a police reporter, the papers will generally assign a feature writer, whose job it is to get the color and not to investigate the facts.

In magazines and books the problem of exploitation of psychic subjects is most acute. These are also the media in which evasion of responsibility is easiest. Consumer magazines in America are an outgrowth of the marketing system. The basic function of the mass magazine is to sell advertising. The function of articles in magazines is to fill up the space between the ads, and to attract people into reading the ads. With few exceptions advertising dictates editorial policy for American general circulation magazines. The result is that the editorial people of most magazines have adopted the advertising man's philosophy—the primary goal is to sell, and within limits it does not matter how you do it. Few editors would condone printing a story that they absolutely knew to be false, just as few advertising men would plan a campaign aimed at selling poison to children. However, the ad man's conscience does allow him to sell cigarettes in "youth oriented" campaigns. The magazine editor's conscience operates at about that level.

I can recall a discussion that I once had with one of the editors who helped to bring the Bridey Murphy reincarnation case so dramatically to the attention of the American public in the late 1950s. This man had training as a reporter, and I don't think that he ever believed a word of the Bridey Murphy story. He certainly was aware of all the holes in it that were later gleefully pointed out by critics. His concern was only to make sure that he was not being made part of a deliberate hoax. The fact that he also believed the people involved to be foolish, and the story itself utterly without foundation did not stop him from spreading it to millions of his readers.

There is a broad class of magazines based entirely upon sensationalism, where the truth appears only by accident. These magazines have millions of readers and one must presume that these readers believe at least some of what they read. I think that the impact of such magazines on the public is underrated by intellectual critics who do not read such publications. Yet even in the case of the better magazines, editors will often print articles that they themselves have grave reservations about, so long as they believe that the article will be good for circulation. No one consciously believes himself to be doing anything wrong; it is merely a part of the accepted morality of the magazine business.

Book publishers are a step farther removed from responsibility for

what they publish. When a magazine prints an article, that magazine and its staff are identified with the views expressed in the article. This is true even if the article is written by someone who is not a staff member, and the magazine attempts to disclaim connection with the views expressed. Book readers will know the name of the author and of the title of a particular book, but unless they are in the publishing business they will not know or care about the book's publisher.

There are differences between publishers. Some publishers are highly conscious of the respectability of their "list." I would imagine that a publisher like Knopf would never touch a book by someone like Jeane Dixon, yet Random House might, and Random House owns Knopf. I believe that too many publishers will ask only two questions—will the book sell and will I get sued. If the answer to the first question is yes and the second is no they will publish no matter what they think of the manuscript.

At the bottom of the barrel of responsibility, or if you want to look at it the other way around, at the top of the exploitation heap, are the paperback books. These are taken seriously by almost nobody but the people who read them. I think that this is a great shame because the paperback book today is the most powerful medium for the printed word. American magazines and newspapers are no longer as widely read as they once were. Witness the death of so many once popular magazines and newspapers. Most people do not buy cloth-bound books. They are too expensive and too hard to get. In fact, most cities and towns in America do not have a single bookstore. Libraries are not used as often as they should be. But practically every little town has at least one drugstore with a rack of paperback books.

Historically the paperback book has a shady reputation. The phrase "paperback novel" used to be almost synonymous with "dirty book." Now practically every popular book comes out in a paperback edition. But still the reputation of paperback books as being something not quite respectable, not quite worthy of serious notice, persists. Books published exclusively as paperbacks are rarely reviewed, and do not often get into libraries. Because of the way they are marketed paperback books have to be quick turnover items. Little thought is given to the permanent value of the book. There are some signs that this state of affairs is changing, but it is not changing nearly fast enough. It is therefore both significant and unfortunate that the most explosive growth of coverage of psychic subjects has come in paperback books.

I would like to insert a word here about the people who write the books and articles. As a group I do not believe that writers are necessarily more corrupt or more uninformed than people in any other profession, psychologists for example, or clergymen. Most of us write what

we believe to be the truth, though sometimes we tailor the truth a bit for the market.

There are, however, those writers guided solely by the consideration of sales, who will write practically anything at all, so long as they can make some money at it. This sort of individual is all too likely to turn up writing about psychic subjects today, because there is easy money in it. A salable paperback manuscript can be turned out in a few weeks, or for an experienced hack, a few days. One needn't be too careful about the facts because there are no reviewers who are going to trip you up on them, and no one is going to care very much if they are wrong.

Now I must stress that most of the people that I have met who write in this field genuinely do believe what they are writing. They may tend to overlook some of the shortcomings in their beliefs, but this is all too human. Then there are those, and among the most successful, by the way, who are thoroughly cynical about their work.

The defense that they will fall back upon is this: "I am merely a reporter objectively recording what I have been told." Such an excuse is complete nonsense. There is no such thing as journalistic objectivity, particularly on a controversial subject. The only people who are objective about psychological research are those who are uninformed or uninterested. How is it possible to have spent time researching a subject and not have developed some sort of judgment on its worth? By recording, uncritically, a set of unchecked and improbable statements the reporter is taking sides whether he comes out and says, "I believe this" or not. The defense of "objectivity" is usually a mask behind which a writer hopes to hide his bias or his cynicism.

In the writing fraternity there is a small but growing group who label themselves as science writers. They, or I might more properly say we, tend to be a bit stuffy. We regard ourselves as just a little bit better, a little bit more intelligent, a little bit more morally pure than the run-of-the-mill writer. This is, of course, one of those self-serving fantasies. Science writers allowed themselves to become practically unpaid publicists for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and for Dr. Christian Barnard and the other transplanters. Many of the very real scandals in science have first been brought to the attention of the public, not by the science writers, who should have been right on top of them, but by reporters in other fields. But for all our shortcomings, the professional science writers have helped to raise science reporting from the "gee whiz!" or "Oh the wonder of it all" level that existed at the end of World War II.

A lot of the reporting of psychological research should be coming from science writers. We have the training and experience to understand

what is going on, and to interpret it for the general public. Yet recognized science writers rarely touch the subject. Why? Because it isn't considered very scientific, and it isn't considered respectable. Two years ago I attended a meeting of the National Association of Science Writers, where I was looked upon as something of a wild-eyed radical because I had merely written about parapsychology, though I had been quite critical. I shudder to think how my colleagues will regard my appearance at this conference.

I have conducted this little tour through the less attractive side of my profession in an attempt to help you ladies and gentlemen understand what you are up against in trying to reach the public, and why the public view of parapsychology is as distorted as it seems to be. I also hope that it will serve as a warning against those members of my profession who appear most sympathetic and friendly, but who in reality are your worst enemies. Sensational and sloppy coverage can be very dangerous for a serious researcher, because it erodes credibility, and historically credibility has been a major problem for parapsychologists.

I would imagine (I hesitate to say predict in this company) that the problem of publicity and credibility will become more acute over the next few years. We in the United States, and I think throughout much of the Western World are undergoing a strong anti-materialist, anti-rationalist, anti-science reaction. People are frustrated and unhappy. The promise of a bright new tomorrow that would be brought about by a combination of scientific achievement and an expanding economy has turned out to be empty. Not everyone is affluent, and those who are do not feel fulfilled. This disappointment, which borders on despair and desperation among the young, has created the reaction. One result of this mood has been a tremendous surge of interest in the occult—everything from astrology to witchcraft. Parapsychology is classed as an occult subject. Many of you may not be happy with that label, but the public classifies it that way, and so do those who control the media. Check any large rack of paperback books and you will find those on ESP filed cheek by jowl with those on palmistry and satanism. The proximity of parapsychology tends to lend an aura of respectability to all of the other occult areas.

It seems to me that the desire to study and explore parapsychology in the first place stems largely from a desire, a hope, that there is indeed something beyond man's mere material nature. It has been this hope, rather than the accumulation of evidence, that has kept the study alive over the past century. But the hope alone has never been entirely satisfactory. That is why foundations are formed, evidence collected, experiments conducted and conferences held. The attitude of those seriously interested in the subject of parapsychology is I believe quite properly

expressed in the title of this conference—"The Continuing Doubts and Affirmations." But as expressed in the popular media today the doubts are irrelevant and the affirmations unnecessary. A common phrase that the interested doubter runs into is, "Oh I know all about that." The words do not mean what they say, for the person speaking them often doesn't know anything about the objection that you are raising. What the words really mean is, "I'm not interested in your criticism," or more ominously, "This discussion is meaningless to me, because I already believe and am beyond discussion."

This breakdown in communication is encouraged by the media, or if not actually encouraged, the media certainly take no responsibility in attempting to correct it. In keeping with the general media attitude that parapsychology is just another form of entertainment, they do not wish to publish a dull article or put on a dull show. Serious discussion is dull when compared with miracle stories and polemics.

Part of the problem of getting parapsychology treated seriously rests with those of us in the field of journalism. Some of us are a bit too fastidious, or more likely, too insecure. We feel as if any treatment of the subject will damage our precious and hard-won reputations as responsible journalists. We also fear that any serious coverage will encourage all the nuts and fakers in the field. There is some justification for these fears, but I see no way in which the problem can be avoided. The alternative is to abandon the field, which has tremendous public interest, to the exclusive possession of the unscrupulous quick buck artists among the writers.

The interested layman, who is not just looking for the latest miracle story, or for the most contemporary bit of supernatural reassurance, will then be left with the choice of reading the junk, or not having any way at all of finding out what is going on.

OPEN DISCUSSION

GREENBANK: I think I would like to make a point that my wife and I have been very concerned about. As she said yesterday, we feel that there are two conferences going on here and yet the two conferences have never really been stated as two conferences, and they operate by different rules. I'm not making a value judgment about either one, but one conference is composed of people, and your background or your own beliefs have nothing to do with this. These are two different approaches.

One approach is the religious approach. The individual feels he knows the truth and seeks, for very valid reasons, to convert others to the true faith. Then the second approach is what I call the scientific approach where the individual seeks to increase knowledge without ever expecting to know the final truth. He does not expect to convert others, but he does expect that if others see the evidence that he has seen, they will arrive at a similar conclusion, or his conclusion is subject to question. In other words, I think these two ways of approaching things are mutually inconsistent with each other and you have to say, "Am I approaching this in a mystical or religious manner or am I approaching this in a scientific manner?" The rules, the arguments, the ground rules are very different, and I think that you ask a scientific question that in some ways is really a religious question.

HILLMAN: I don't take such a pessimistic view as you do.

WEINER: I found Mr. Hillman's presentation most fruitful, and I use the word "fruitful" deliberately. In my own tradition the image of the fruit and the flower is used for this question of fantasy and hard core problem (fruit being that which one can really view within a concrete nutritious fashion, and there is no fruit without a flower ever and, also, fruits produce flowers). They must always be with each other otherwise there is sterility—which is the way I feel about what I think is a false dichotomy between the so-called scientific and what we call religious

approach. I think that the poetic, the imaginative, combined with the sensible practical is a kind of living which all of us do, and we have brought together here various components of it. There are doors to reality that one can open by a fantasy or play approach that simply will close themselves when one comes to them with a scientific attitude. It must happen. It must be serious. Certain doors are closed when we come in. In fact, the main doors in human interchange close, whether it be in a love relationship or a communicable relationship, they close, and the playfulness opens them up. Plato described play as the way by which a man can reach the highest levels of truth or the most trivial things, but added that man is essentially an animal that likes to play. Therefore I come to the suggestion that is not novel, but that comes to me as a kind of inner conclusion from what I have been exposed to at this conference.

There is an approach to psychic, mystical, parapsychological phenomena which involves an individual so that he enters into a situation where these phenomena exist in a circle or in a group or with a person not necessarily as a hard-boiled reporter or someone who is just going to be tough in his attitude. If one can come in and achieve what Coleridge calls a "willing suspension of disbelief," not become a disbeliever, but achieve a temporary suspension of disbelief and enter into this game which can open doors, not close them, then it's been my personal experience that parapsychological phenomena of the type we're interested in are not killed—do not run away. This is the approach that was made in the book that I mentioned earlier, *The Teachings of Don Juan*. It's been my own personal approach in my efforts to sense the many world experiences of the Jewish mystics. I think it is not impossible for one to open the many doors to parapsychological experiments. I think one door could be the going to where the play takes place, and incidentally all play must take place within a certain setting. When you take the play out of that setting, you can't play anymore. You go to the place where the play takes place. You suspend your disbelief. You can then (without becoming a true believer) be exposed to phenomena and be able to record them in a fashion that I think the laboratory sometimes does not allow. This is not the only approach, but I think it is a legitimate one.

MUNDLE: I'd like to refer to the "two conferences" that Dr. Greenbank spoke of. From the very beginning psychical research has involved an alliance of people whose motives for being interested in the phenomena differed. The Society for Psychical Research from the beginning included and welcomed skeptics, people whose interests were purely scientific; people whose interests were predominantly religious

or designed to prove an afterlife—a dualist philosophical or religious theory showing that the motives of interest are not the most important thing.

Now, whatever our motives may be, we who are interested in psychology, we who are interested in parapsychology, whether they are the kind of fantasies which Dr. Hillman has outlined or whether they are as Sir Alister has frankly acknowledged (which is in a wide sense a religious motivation), whether our motive is purely scientific or not, it is most profitable and most important that people with different motives should get together for discussion with each other.

Now I don't think there has been a failure of communication between those whose interest is primarily scientific and those whose interest is perhaps more religious, and I congratulate Eileen Garrett on bringing together groups of people whose motivation is different, whose backgrounds are different and who are communicating.

GREENBANK: I must answer that because I'm not saying they can't communicate or they shouldn't communicate, and I'm glad they are communicating, but they have to understand each other's ground rules, and let me give you an example of what I mean. If I say "I *believe* this is made out of plastic," this is a religious statement and it cannot be challenged by anybody else. It is a statement of what I believe. If I say "I *think* this is made out of plastic," then you can bring in all sorts of chemical or physical tests and begin to say "Well, what is plastic and how will we test to see that this is plastic." And that is scientific. Now they are two different approaches, and that's all I meant by saying that you can't challenge my belief that this is made out of plastic because that's a statement of what is going on inside of me, not a statement about this.

HARDY: I think it's possible to combine the two. I was just wondering what category Dr. Greenbank would put me into. Am I a scientist or am I a religionist? I am practically a religionist, yes, but I am hoping to, or I hope I am applying a scientific method as an anthropologist for studying religious phenomena, and I think I can do both.

GREENBANK: You can be one one moment and another another moment.

HARDY: Yes, that's what I hope I am.

CUTTEN: We only have time for one more question. Mr. Roll?

ROLL: In connection with this discussion, I think what you said and others have said is that you are describing this situation in terms of contemporary concept. You can describe this plastic ash tray in both

ways, but you have to make sure, and your audience has to make sure, which way you are describing it at that time because the rules are different, and at the same time you have to follow the principle of complementarity—one thing at one time and the other thing at the other time. But I think this conference does indeed represent this complementarity, and I think perhaps that's one of the most exciting things in the movement at the present time—that the field of parapsychology is embracing these two aspects in the subject matter.

CUTTEN: Thank you. Now I think we'll have to pause on that note and go on to Mr. Cohen's paper. I would like first to make a comment or two. First, I agree entirely with practically all you said. As secretary of the SPR I am inundated by journalists and I'm aware of the difficulties. I've been told "If you don't allow us to dramatize these things, the public is not going to be interested." We almost got to the point where we said to all journalists and producers, "Look, we have nothing to say," and send them on their way. I wonder if you would like to give us any advice as to how to handle these people.

COHEN: I don't know. Sometimes there's simply no way of handling it. Just as much as time permits, try and be as careful as you can in your statements and stress your reservations or state your views as carefully as possible. Try not to get involved with the most disreputable of people. This is not always easy. In fact, the reporter who comes to you may be quite reputable and by the time it goes through either the print shop or the film editors or whatever medium it is, it comes out unrecognizable. Grit your teeth hard and live with it. Let me put it this way. Until the field itself has moved into a position of unchallenged respect where no one is going to dispute what you are saying—as most people aren't going to misquote Christian Barnard—and until this field has moved into a position of respect, you're going to run into this. My only warning would be to be as careful as you possibly can because, as I'm sure you know, there are a lot of pretty awful people.

PAHNKE: The discussion about the journalistic task and communication, etc., makes me wonder about the basic assumption which I've heard you say, and I'm wondering whether our primary task *is* to communicate with the public. To me, the primary task is to find out something for its own sake and I don't really care whether the public knows about it or not.

COHEN: I'd like to respond to that. Firstly, parapsychology is such a field where, whether you want to communicate with the public or not, if you're doing anything that is vaguely exciting the newspapers and

magazines are going to find out about it anyway. You are going to be forced to communicate with the public on whatever you're doing, or they just simply are going to communicate with the public in whatever way they see fit. Secondly, the field of parapsychology itself suffers from, I think, a lack of funds generally, a lack of trained workers while there is a great deal of popular interest. I think compared to other areas of scientific endeavor, there are not many people who are willing to put time and money into it, so that public interest is absolutely necessary in order to keep the field alive. I think Mr. Cutten told me just the other day that the average age of the Board of the SPR is sixty-nine.

CUTTEN: It was. We're trying to correct that now.

ROLL: This is a real problem. I think the media are necessary in order to get people interested in the serious side. There are very few college courses. There's really no other way to communicate with people and people who can contribute brilliant things of value—not just to feed your own egos about becoming celebrities—but it is necessary because in itself it can be valuable.

COHEN: You could also take this approach: "I don't want to talk to you or discuss it. Here's what I've written; it's very clear. Take it and read it." I've found some reporters don't even bother to read what you've written. I've talked to several reporters who have told me they can't even read it. I think it's terrible. In any other science, a reporter will look into the subject more deeply, but in this field, if given the information, he won't even read it. It's an individual matter having to do with an individual reporter. I can only lay out the situation in general terms and point out some of the pitfalls.

ANGOFF: Mr. Cohen has justly played the American journalist; Mr. Cutten has taken care of the English journalist. I thought you might be interested to know that even in India, supposedly moving along much higher standards, they have this same problem of the melodramatic and even the corrupt in their journalism. Dr. Kanthamani might want to say something about that. She has told me about it in our informal talks here and I have learned it myself in my recent visit to India. I guess we can assume that no country is immune to this sort of thing.

CUTTEN: Would you like to comment on that, Dr. Kanthamani?

KANTHAMANI: I agree with what Mr. Angoff has said. India is not devoid of this practice. Some of the magazines have used a lot of this for propaganda, and often the press had to say a mistake was made and withdraw its statement. More often, though, statements are not with-

drawn, and unfortunately we are not yet in the class where we can avoid this and the public therefore doesn't appreciate what we are talking about. This does happen a lot.

CUTTEN: To what extent, if he wants to correct a wrong impression, can the scientist or investigator go, and to what extent is it responsible?

COHEN: Well, in the first place it depends very much on the nature of the publication that has made the error, and if indeed it is an error or just a deliberate distortion. Sir Alister the other day asked me about a distorted article about some of his ideas that appeared in a publication in the United States, and whether they would print some sort of correction. Knowing that publication quite well, I advised him simply to forget about it because they would do nothing of the sort. He would only get himself in deeper and deeper. It's a dreadful morass. If it's a responsible publication like the *Times* or some of the larger magazines, if the reporter himself has a responsibility, he can make corrections. But by and large reporters have a problem. Sometimes they're asked to submit their manuscripts before publication, but this is difficult for one thing because they're often working on short deadlines, and also because quite frankly many people, particularly in the sciences, get a little picky, and they'll nit-pick you to death and you'll never get your article published, so I always hesitate when someone asks me to submit an article before publication. I'm afraid I may be involved in three or four or five or even six months of tedious correspondence when my deadline is only one week away. Regarding the responsibility of the groups—I'm not sure of the drift of the second part of your question.

CUTTEN: Well, seeking to protect the SPR. They have certain responsibilities to the public. How can we see that the facts are reported correctly?

COHEN: Well, here again, probably the best method by which you can do this (and this is a method used in many areas by many of the sciences) is to cultivate certain writers and reporters whom you consider responsible and simply feed the stories to them. It's not the most adequate way of doing things. It smacks of all sorts of things, but still it's a method, so that you cooperate with certain people and you just simply do not cooperate with others. I can't really think of any other way of doing it.

CUTTEN: I'd like to mention that nobody is immune to it. Sir Alister was described in large headlines at one time as "carrying out an experiment with God."

HARDY: I can't tell you how much I value your advice because this is one of my greatest problems. As part of my research, I try to appeal to the public to send me records. I started off by having an article which I sent to every editor of the denominational religious journals in the country, and they didn't print it in full. They did print it in some reduced form with disappointing results. When I got into general publications, they asked me if I would give them an interview. I made a condition that I would if they would quote me correctly and state the facts so that I could make an appeal to the public. Well, they were very good about that part of it, but I didn't know what the editor was going to use for the headline, and it was perfectly appalling. I got a tremendous response and, as a result of that, the *Observer* asked me whether I would give a feature writer an article, which I did with the same condition. They produced an appeal and the article itself was very good, but I had no idea it was going to have a cartoon of myself. And then the *Times* allowed me to have two articles of my own. But are there many journals that will allow this sort of thing? I want to get into general journals that will allow me to put forward my appeal without sensationalism.

COHEN: It's very difficult to say. I can think of a couple that very likely would, but I don't think that any, aside from purely scientific journals or what might be called non-commercial journals, have any fixed policy either for or against interviewees reviewing articles about them. I don't have broad enough experience, but I would venture to guess that most of them probably do not. For example, in the *New Yorker* magazine, it is translated into *New Yorker* magazine language, and if you don't like it—well, that's just too bad. You know, they're not going to let you alter their language. I would say that in an individual case you would have to ask the individual reporter or writer about this and explain the condition. I think it would be a good condition, particularly in your case, and just hope he will agree to it, and then hope that by the time it gets to the editor and headline writers and cartoonists, etc., that it still resembles something with which you want to be associated, and then simply develop a rhinoceros hide and wait for the results.