PSI FACTORS IN CREATIVITY

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HELD AT LE PIOL, ST. PAUL DE VENCE, FRANCE
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EDITED BY

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INTRODUCTION

ANGOFF: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the President and Trustees of the Parapsychology Foundation, I am glad to declare open the Eighteenth International Conference of the organization. All of you have come a very considerable distance, and the Foundation is grateful for your cooperation.

Now, our subject is Creativity—psi factors in creativity, the psychic force in creativity, in science, art, literature, music, history, mathematics, physics, education, neurophysiology, and many other areas.

Creativity, I need hardly say now, is a baffling phenomenon, and as Dr. Rollo May and others have remarked, there have, until recent years, been relatively few studies of it. Rollo May in fact says, and I quote him directly, "The subject has been generally avoided as unscientific, mysterious, disturbing, and too corruptive of the scientific training of graduate students." And, as you know, there is the widest diversity of views regarding the nature of creativity. Citing Dr. May again, "Creativity is the encounter of the intensively conscious human being with his world."

But for Harold Lasswell, a political scientist (again I quote), "Creativity is the disposition to make and to recognize valuable innovations." For the French mathematician Henri Poincaré, scientific genius or creativity (as he meant it) is ". . . the capacity to be surprised." For Edmund Sinnot of Yale, creativity is the ultimate source of life itself. To quote him, "It is unorthodox biology." The psychiatrist, Lawrence Kubie, says the creative person knows how to use his subconscious faculties simply better than others who may be just as gifted.

Now, turning to literature, as we seek to discern the reasons for a Tolstoy or a Shakespeare or a Dante, we find still other views. Robert Frost, A. E. Housman, Goethe himself, among others, have testified to the seemingly inexplicable and utter spontaneity of creativity as they have known it.

T. S. Eliot, as many of you know, has said that when the poet creates, he surrenders himself to something greater, and that there is in creation a continual extinction of the personality. Shelley, in his famous essay on

poetry, has said that in creating poetry, he became an inhabitant of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos.

You might be interested in what Robert Graves, a good friend of Mrs. Garrett and of the Foundation, has written. We had hoped he'd come to this conference, but unfortunately he was ill. He is now recovering. In a letter to me and to Mrs. Garrett, he remarked, in his own pixyish way, "As for creativity, as for ESP and genius, the problem is a very simple one. When one is in a poetic trance, one thinks in the fifth dimension, probably a faculty inherited from our long, pre-hominoid state, and is thus able to bend time in loops. In danger, one thinks in the fourth dimension, and escapes through a brick wall. I have long been aware of this. The physicists and the mathematicians are just now catching up with what I wrote in poems in the thirties and forties." That is our good friend, Robert Graves.

Finally, there is the anthropologist Loren Eiseley, long a student of creativity. Awed and humbled by the creative force in man, he has made an observation which I think may perhaps mark a good beginning for our conference. Please let me quote him. This is Eiseley speaking: "The creative element in the mind of man, that latency which can conceive gods, carve statues, move the heart with the symbols of great poetry, or devise formulas of modern physics, emerges in as mysterious a fashion as those elementary particles which leap into momentary existence in great cyclotrons, only to vanish again like infinitesimal ghosts. The reality we know in our limited lifetimes is dwarfed by the unseen potential of the abyss where science stops. In a similar way" (and I'm still quoting Loren Eiseley), "the smaller universe of the individual brain has its lonely cometary passages, or flares suddenly like a super nova, only to subside in death while the waves of energy it has released roll on through unnumbered generations."

That, I say, is Eiseley, and I submit it's a pretty good note on which to start our deliberations here. However, turning to another aspect of our conference, I must say that we could hardly begin it without a word from that great and gracious friend of learning who is our hostess this year—as she has been in all the many meetings held here since she organized this Foundation two decades ago. Scholars throughout the world who have come to these conferences or to the Foundation's offices in New York, have long testified to her stimulating and unique influence. I refer, of course, to the President of this Foundation, and I hope I can prevail on her to say a few words before we begin our discussions.

Mrs. Garrett, I wonder if you have a few words for the group?

OPENING ADDRESSES

GARRETT: Ladies and gentlemen, first of all let me thank you from the bottom of my heart for coming here. As to the subject of our conference, creativity and psi, let me say only that I have just enough knowledge to keep quiet and listen to what my betters have to say. I know that I shall learn something from this conference and enjoy it, and I'm sure that all of you will too. Once again, thank you for coming and thanks for listening to me.

ANGOFF: Thank you very much, Mrs. Garrett. And now, ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to introduce the coordinator for the entire conference, Dr. Henry Margenau of Yale University.

MARGENAU: Mrs. Garrett, ladies and gentlemen, I shall perform my task sitting down, opening an informal series of conferences where dignity and other official matters are largely ignored. As Mr. Angoff has said, my official role is that of coordinator, and this is merely a euphemism for watchdog. I'm supposed to be the guy who will call straying and straggling speakers into line, a person who is going to incur the wrath of many of you before these three days are over.

Let me also disclaim all responsibility and credit for the excellent arrangements which you are now enjoying. Indeed, the benefit of your impressive presence is entirely to the credit of Allan Angoff, and his work cannot have been an easy job, for it must have been difficult to get you here.

I'm sure that I speak your minds when I express our thanks to Mrs. Garrett for making this occasion possible. I fell under the spell of this gracious lady long ago, and many of you are perhaps experiencing the unfolding of her remarkable qualities for the first time at these meetings. Her life and her achievements are well known, not only through her own writings, but also, and mainly through the writings of others. Her fame is matched only by her generosity and her hospitality which we are enjoying here. Her work, if I may say so, is a continual sequence of performances that exhibit creativity and psi, and we are here to discuss, appraise, and I suppose clarify the meaning of the experience of creativity and psi.

Now, the first step toward clarification is a definition of terms, and I shall follow the example of Allan who began to tell us what various

people have thought about the significance of such things as psi and creativity; hence, I too shall make an attempt at defining things.

Now, to me, creativity has three components: The first is novelty. Ordinary experience, sensory experience, the blooming buzzing confusion of William James presents this novelty implied by the word creativity, but that alone is not creative. If you add to novelty the element of surprise, you have something which is called emergent, as the term is used, for example, in evolution. Novel and surprising, in my view, means emergent, but mere emergence is not creativity. The third component which makes emergence into creativity is significance. And significance is a large term to which many philosophers have devoted their attention.

I, myself, distinguish four kinds of significance: The first is communicative significance which, when added to emergence (that is to say to novelty and surprise), makes for the creativity of the poet, the painter or the musician. Next, I think of scientific significance—the fitting of an experience within an orderly scheme called scientific methodology, and this makes in the end for scientific significance. Then there is moral, and here I include legal significance—significance which arises from the orderly enmeshing of procedures and experiences within a network of rules, and here we find creators like Hammurabi, Moses, Confucius and even Albert Schweitzer.

But the final, and to me perhaps the highest kind of significance is purely personal—that which transcends the realm of all kinds of lawfulness—communicative, scientific, and even moral, personal significance, where a man is on his own, where he can choose to confer upon an act the significance of the martyr or the saint or the criminal. It's the type of significance that stamps an experience as creative within a given field. In all fields you encounter the elements of novelty and surprise.

Well, there's a lot more to be said. I hope that all of you will deliver yourselves of your views on the meaning of creativity as I have attempted to very briefly here.

Next, I suppose it behooves me to say a few words about psi, and here I'm on rather shaky ground. So far as I know, the term "psi" was introduced into the parapsychological literature by Professor Rhine, who meant by it a kind of potpourri. In his view, psi was the sort of thing that transcends comprehensibility. This older view of psi, which, incidentally, I do not share, was based upon a view of scientific knowledge, of scientific truth which is perhaps no longer tenable. Let me tell you what it is. The sciences of the last century believed themselves to be founded upon a set of primary propositions, basic propositions, that were wholly indubitable, wholly unchangeable, and surely ultimate in

their validity. It was the characteristic of science to be able to proclaim such basic truths. Let me remind you: Geometry was based upon the axioms, the postulates of Euclid, and these you simply learned, and their truth was evident, or there were philosophical theories about how they arose. There was the theory of Plato, the theory of reminiscences which claimed that we knew these truths by exposure to them in earlier purer lives. There was the theory of the lumen naturale, the natural light in the human soul which somehow conveyed these basic truths. There was St. Augustine's light, the Divine Light in the human soul. There were numerous theories which attempted to explain how and why man can hold such truths.

Now, during the middle of the last century, a movement began in science which led to an abrogation of these fundamental propositions. It began around 1850 when mathematicians first cast some doubt on the axioms of Euclidean geometry. There was one axiom, the parallel axiom, which hung somewhat loosely in the set of postulates and which these men first attempted to derive from the other basic tenets. They did not succeed. And then they became sufficiently audacious to doubt the validity of this basic parallel postulate and to replace it by another, expecting to find a system of geometry, a system of theorems which would be contradictory and therefore collapse, but the opposite was true. They discovered a new kind of geometry, involving theorems different from those of Euclid. The theorems were peculiar, to be sure, novel, emergent, I suppose, and finally creative, and they contradicted the view that there could be only one set of truths in geometry. You cannot have the Euclidean parallel postulate alongside these non-Euclidean postulates. The question arose as to what is true? More than that, it finally developed that the theorems of non-Euclidean geometry are more in harmony with certain observations in the far reaches of the universe than is Euclidean geometry.

Now this for the first time raised the question as to "truth" in science. Which is true, Euclidean geometry or non-Euclidean geometry? The doubts that thus arise have since then developed into a dense cloud enveloping all of the sciences. There's not one science that harbors the idea of absolute truth any longer. We know that we have to start with certain logical, scientific commitments—commitments to propositions of which we cannot be absolutely sure. This happened, of course, in physics, where we no longer believe in the ultimacy of such dicta as the principle of conservation of energy, mass or momentum. They are still being held, but they're held on trial. In fact, science no longer harbors any sentence, any belief which ultimately fails to expose itself to the threat of falsification. So absolute truth seems to be gone out of science.

Let me remind you of the legend which speaks of a temple erected in Sais, an ancient place near the mouth of the Nile. The ruins of the temple are still visible today. The temple was said to contain a veiled image inscribed THE TRUTH. No one was allowed to remove the veil. A young man, presumably a scientist driven by the quest for truth, entered the temple, and attempted to remove the veil. He was prohibited, of course, by the attendants who stood in awe of the ancient law. The young man left, but planned sacrilege and at night he came back to the temple, lifted the veil and what he saw, nobody knows. The legend says that he was found near death at the foot of the veiled picture the next morning. When revived, he refused to speak of his experience. His life was undistinguished thereafter and he fell into an early grave.

Now I'll add to it my own interpretation. I suppose what he saw may have been an inscription something like this: "You fool. There is no truth in final form. Only knaves would wish to acquire it without toil and heartache." Man is endowed with a virtue called Search for Eternal Truth—absolute, final, and unalterable. Ultimate truth does not exist.

Now the people who believe in truth in final formulation, who know all the facts, or claim to be able to distinguish between what is natural, that which is in conformity with their precepts of truth, and that which is not, which is unnatural, supernatural,—they built a wall around the domain of truth and called everything outside the wall, psi. This, I think, was Dr. Rhine's original attitude. Now the wall is gone. We know that there are certain areas of knowledge where scientific understanding prevails, but since the wall is gone, we now find psi all over, in all areas of human activity and human experience. Psi is beckoning us wherever man engages in creative activity. We are making a try at understanding it. Some of it may be a will-o'-the-wisp. Some of it, I'm sure, will appear as a light at the end of the scientific road when the scientific job is done. At any rate, we're here to discuss it.

PARTICIPANTS' BACKGROUNDS AND INTERESTS

MARGENAU: And now Mrs. Garrett, Mr. Angoff, may I turn to some procedural matters. I would like everyone in this room to introduce himself at this time, stating his affiliation, and also what he does for a living.

Emilio Servadio. I am a psychoanalyst, and current president of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society. I have been interested in parapsychology for many, many years, and I have made some contributions, particularly insofar as the psychodynamic and psychoanalytic approaches to psi phenomena are concerned.

Joost Meerloo. I am a retired Professor of Psychiatry. I live in Amsterdam, Holland, and I am at this moment busy at the task of writing about abnormal psychological and parapsychological subjects.

George Rochberg. I am a composer who earns his living by teaching at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. For years, I have read about things which I suppose could be considered to be related to paranormal experience and I find myself in a rather curious way delighted to be here because suddenly all of these things become directly meaningful to me.

Yu-Kuang Chu. I was born and educated in China. I came to the United States for graduate study at Columbia University for three years from 1927 to 1930, then went back to China and taught in various universities. My family and I came to the United States in 1947, and since that time I have taught at Pomona College, California and for a much longer time at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York. I am interested in the problem of creativity as a layman, you might say. I'm not noted as a creative worker or writer, or painter, and I'm not a specialist on psi factors, but I am interested in the general problem of creativity and shall speak on some Oriental views on creativity.

Frank Jennings. I earn my living, I suppose, as an educator of a kind. I've been the Educational Director of The New World Foundation, and I'm also an editor at large of the Saturday Review which means I deal with people who deal with writing and ideas and so I'm fascinated by all aspects of creativity, whatever it means, and I have formulated dozens of definitions all of which leave me with a bad taste in my mouth.

Arthur Bleksley. I used to earn my living as the head of the department of Applied Mathematics in the University of Witwatersrand, but I escaped from there at the end of last year when I retired, and now I am fairly much a gentleman at large. My own interest in psi investigation goes back quite a long while.

Austin Towle. I am a graduate student of Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio under a Stone Research Fellowship, and I am also a Fellow of the newly created Institute for Theoretical Study. That has no particular place where it resides, but it seems right now to reside in the computer network and we have Fellows in various parts of the country who are linked over the nationwide network of computers. The Institute is dedicated to studies in and related to the foundations of theoretical physics, and so my interest in creativity and psi seems to fit right in with the purposes of the Institute. I have been very much encouraged since 1962 by Mrs. Garrett who encouraged me to get more deeply into physics if I really wanted to understand psi better, so that's my occasion for being here.

Kenneth Burke. I began with an interest in literature, poetry, narrative drama, from that to a concern with literary criticism. That led me to a concern with the theory of symbolic action in general—the symbol systems in general and I base everything on my basic investment as a distinction between motion and action, which I hope you ladies and gentlemen will help me to hold up or to give up according to our discussions.

Jerre Mangione. I have earned my living in a variety of ways, but seven years ago I joined the University of Pennsylvania and I am now Professor of English. My main preoccupations are reading and writing.

Patricia Mangione. I'm a painter and I have taught painting for a number of years. I don't teach any more, but after reading about the psi factor, I think it has a lot to do with painting.

Eugenio Gaddini. I'm a medical doctor and psychoanalyst. I discovered psi factors while practicing psychoanalysis. They became the truth for me the moment I had to face them, although I knew about them. From that moment on, I've been following psi and trying to understand it better.

Grey Walter. I am a neurophysiologist at Burden Neurological Institute, Bristol. I am interested in the functioning of the central nervous system in relation to ESP phenomena.

Henry Margenau. I am a physicist and philosopher at Yale University.

MARGENAU: We're now ready for the first paper, and that is by Harold Taylor, entitled "Creative Factors in Education." Unfortunately, Mr. Taylor is not able to be present. His paper is available, however, and Allan Angoff is going to read it.

ANGOFF: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Coordinator, let me say I'm well aware

of the fact that I'm something of an impostor reading what, I think, is a very good paper. If it strikes you as pretty good, remember it is Harold Taylor's writing. He prepared this at the very end; he worked very hard, and at the last moment because of a serious family emergency, could not come here.