

OPENING REMARKS

HOYT EDGE: Thank you, Eileen and Lisette. It is always a pleasure to participate in one of the Parapsychology Foundation's conferences and a special privilege to be involved in the 40th conference, a significant milestone. The opportunity for such intense and lengthy discussion among participants in a conference is rare, and if any subject deserves special attention, it is the one which is our focus for the next two days.

Survival has been discussed for as long as humans have existed, and it was a central issue—perhaps *the* central issue—for the founders of parapsychology over a century ago. The two basic sets of questions that undergird the discussion then is still the focus of our papers today: the philosophical questions—of how we understand the self that can survive and whether it is even logically possible—and the empirical questions—of what evidence can be gathered and how to evaluate it. These original questions still are asked, but the answers today are broader and deeper.

Philosophically, the question of survival became more intense in the late 19th-century against the background of the growing mechanistic materialism inherent in Cartesian dualism and from the implications of Darwinism. In many ways, the evidence for materialism has only strengthened over the last 100 years. Data from cognitive science, from neuro- and physiological psychology, from sociobiology, and from early discoveries in the human genome project, among other areas, have been interpreted to support materialist theories. While I believe there are significant data and movements in traditional science which cast doubt on purely reductionist views, it is safe to say that the overwhelming number of natural and social scientists and most philosophers are materialists of one sort or another. Against this background, however, parapsychologists are discussing new and non-reductionistic ways of understanding the self and what we might mean by survival.

In terms of the second question, involving the empirical evidence for survival, the case is different. Research has changed significantly in the last century. Quite simply, there has been a movement from the study of mediums to an investigation of ordinary people. It is important to

note that Eileen Garrett not only spanned the pivotal time of this change, forming a bridge between the two methodologies, but she helped create the modern approach. As we all know, Eileen, as one of and probably the last of the great mediums in the history of parapsychology, was wonderful about participating as a subject in research projects. But she also supported the research that investigated the extraordinary abilities of ordinary people; and the Parapsychology Foundation has continued its support of this new research focusing no longer on the great medium but on diverse approaches, including relatively new areas, like NDE research, which has established itself as a subject area apart from parapsychology.

With the diversity and depth achieved both in the philosophical questions and in the empirical questions—and we have papers on both areas—we are in for some serious discussion.