

THE RELEVANCE TO PARAPSYCHOLOGY OF A FEMINIST APPROACH TO SCIENCE

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Although this conference is titled "Women and Parapsychology," to my mind we are gathered here not simply to describe what women have done in parapsychology. Women have been in parapsychology since the beginning, and they did pretty much the same things the men did, though often without equal pay, equal power, equal privilege, or equal recognition. What I am interested in describing and discussing at this conference is a feminist approach to psi.

My specific aim, originally, was to relate feminist approaches in psychology to parapsychology, but when I was asked to give the initial paper, I decided to broaden my approach somewhat. I now plan to describe feminist approaches to science in general and how they could be applied with profit to parapsychology, but I will save a more detailed review of specific suggestions for my position paper on Sunday.

Broadly speaking, the feminist approach to science has taken two main forms. The first wave of women in science addressed themselves primarily to questions of equality. They documented instances of male privilege and of female underprivilege, and campaigned—and are still campaigning—for equal treatment for equal work. Women with higher credentials than men not only do not receive commensurate pay, but they also are not selected for the higher positions of authority, and they tend to be given, and be willing to accept, the more clerical and pedestrian tasks.

Alvarado (1989) and Zingrone (1988) have documented this situation in parapsychology. Zingrone (1988) compared the number of males and females publishing articles in the *Journal of Parapsychology* and *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* for the years 1937-1946 and 1977-1986. In both periods, nearly two thirds of the authors were male. In addition, both male and female authors tended to acknowledge male colleagues more often than females. Zingrone notes that her data suggest "the possible influence of gender in career path

trajectories, social roles in the profession, and employment and publication opportunities" (p. 321).

Alvarado (1989) reviewed the history of the role of women in parapsychology, especially as researchers and administrators. He found that many historians of parapsychology do not even mention women. In a survey of English-language parapsychology journals for the years 1958-1987, he found 35 papers about researchers or persons interested in parapsychology, but only two were women. To account for this circumstance he suggested that even though women have been involved in parapsychology from the early days of the SPR, their work has not received attention because "most writers have proceeded on the common assumption that outlining the work of prominent men in a field is sufficient to explore the history of a discipline" (p. 235). Alvarado also surveyed the types of work women have done in parapsychology, observing that "many women have performed secretarial, administrative, and editorial work vital to the field, but their work generally has gone unrecognized" (p. 241). He calls for studies of the role of women in parapsychology in order to obtain a more balanced view of the field: "The story cannot be told by paying attention only to the socially, economically, and politically privileged élite" (p. 244).

Alvarado's points are well taken, but I would like to suggest yet another reason for the lack of attention to the role of women per se—one that applies not only to parapsychology, but until the 1970s, to every field. It is simply that every field took for granted the basically androcentric view that science is "unambiguously based on observation of 'facts' or 'data,' linked by rigorous logic to hypotheses and theories...and...progresses through an accumulation of such knowledge" (Crawford & Marecek, 1989, pp. 477-478). Increasingly, marginalized groups, including feminist scientists in the physical, social, and behavioral sciences, have begun to question this paradigm and to initiate new conceptions of the nature of science. As they uncovered the gender-based distortions and biases in their respective fields and in science in general, they became skeptical concerning the scientific method and the objectivity of its findings, eventually even questioning the basis of scientific knowledge itself (Bleier, 1984; Haraway, 1989; Latour & Woolgat, 1979; Sherman & Beck, 1979). Several feminist scholars argue that thought itself, especially the body of scientific thought, has been masculinized (Bordo, 1986; Haraway, 1989; Hubbard, 1988a,

1988b; Keller, 1985, 1987; Harding & O'Barr, 1987; Shotter & Logan, 1988; Spender, 1981), and to the extent that it has been, it presents only a partial view. Bordo (1986) proposes that masculinity is not simply a biological category but "a cognitive style, an epistemological stance" (p. 451). It is characterized by detachment, autonomy, separation, distance. Keller (1985) says the masculine view of science involves "a radical rejection of any commingling of subject and object" (p. 79). According to Bordo (1986, p. 263): "Boys tend to grow up learning to experience the world like Cartesians, while girls do not, because of developmental asymmetries resulting from female-dominated infant care, rather than from biology, anatomy, or 'nature'"(p. 455). She adds: "The Cartesian reconstruction of the world is a defiant gesture of independence from the female cosmos—a gesture that is at the same time compensation for a profound loss" (p. 455).

Countering this cognitive style of masculinity is, in Bordo's (1986) words, the feminine stance:

The recent scholarly emergence and revaluation of epistemological and ethical perspectives that have been identified as feminine in classical as well as contemporary writing . . . claim a natural foundation for knowledge, not in detachment and distance, but in closeness, connectedness, and empathy. They find the failure of connection (rather than the blurring of boundaries) as the principle cause of breakdown in understanding. (p. 455)

The work of these feminists is embedded in a larger postmodern intellectual movement to reconceptualize epistemology, or the theory of how we know what we know. (For reviews of feminist epistemological concerns, see Crawford, 1989; Crawford & Marecek, 1989; Fee, 1986; Gergen, 1988; Harding & Hintikka, 1983; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988, 1991; Hartsock, 1983; Hawkesworth, 1987; Ricketts, 1989; Unger, 1982, 1989.) Some of the criticisms of the androcentric scientific approach are that reason is valued above feeling; that thought is structured so that we tend to organize experience in opposites; and that the cornerstone of androcentric science, which is the view that the scientist is an objective observer, is an illusion that is preventing us from seeing reality whole. In parapsychology there have been grumblings about the ubiquity of the experimenter effect, of the need to involve the emotions of subject and experimenter in order to achieve significant

results, and suggestions for a more holistic approach. I have tried to emphasize these views in my own writings, not realizing at the time that I was expressing a feminist stance. But in 1989 I finally read Evelyn Fox Keller, and my eyes were opened at last. I began to read the literature on feminist approaches to science, and it was readily apparent to me that many of the stumbling blocks and hangups in other scientific disciplines are similar to those in parapsychology, and they can be attributed to the one-sided androcentric approach to science that has ruled in those fields even as it has in parapsychology. The party line in parapsychology is that we can't ask the really important questions, just as we can't in psychology, because the scientific method can only deal with observable, measurable variables. Yet what the scientific method can measure is not telling us very much about our subject matter. I have been arguing for years that instead of refraining from asking the important questions, we should revamp the scientific method! It is not writ in stone! At last I glimpsed a group of scientists who felt the same way—not about parapsychology, of course, but about whatever subject they were in: anthropology, biology, chemistry, education, history, linguistics, literature, medicine, philosophy, physical education, physics, sociology. They seemed so far ahead of where I was that the image that kept coming to my mind was of the tail end of a thundering herd of cattle disappearing in the distance—they were so far ahead of me that what I mostly saw was only the dust created by their movement.

At that moment I stopped trying to grapple with parapsychology and science as such, and began running as hard as I could to catch up with that thundering herd. If I could join that group of feminist scientists and learn what they had to offer, I felt quite sure I'd be in a much better position to understand parapsychology and science than I ever could otherwise. I'm still running! What's more, I felt I had joined the wide world at last, being no longer stuck in the backwater of parapsychology (which I once thought was at the forefront of the sciences). With feminist science and another subject that has engaged my attention in the past year, postmodernism, I feel I am beginning to understand what is happening at the growing edge of thought. Here is where the action is in our time, and surely what is happening is at least partially relevant to parapsychology. I'm in the process of trying to find out! I have summarized some of my ideas in articles in *Exceptional Human Experience* (White, 1990, 1991).

One thing I learned is that the most recent wave of feminist thinkers are no longer content simply to seek equality. That is as important an issue as ever, but women scientists are now also criticizing androcentric science and hoping to offset its bias with new feminist approaches. This "second wave" of feminist approaches to science began in the late 1960s and the 1970s. What have been called the "feminist standpoint theorists" sprang up in every academic discipline (except parapsychology, it seems), arguing that what both sexes had taken for granted as the "only" way of doing science primarily had its roots in a distinctly male, or androcentric, view of nature and how it should be studied scientifically. Conversely, these same theorists began to realize that a distinctly female approach in science was needed in all of the sciences (and presumably in parapsychology as well). Feminist methodologies and theories have been offered in every field from English studies and philosophy to nuclear physics and medicine.

As I became acquainted with the literature, I was amazed to learn that in addition to prominent names such as Evelyn Fox Keller (1982, 1983, 1985, 1987) and Sandra Harding (1982, 1983, 1986, 1987, 1989; Harding & Hintikka, 1983), hundreds of women were writing about feminist science. I learned that in a sense it is a misnomer to use the term "feminist science" in the singular, because one of the primary tenets is that doing science the feminist way is pluralistic. One could argue that androcentric science also has different approaches. In parapsychology, for example, we have the experimental approach, we have field methods, we have case studies, we have the historical method, we have meta-analysis. But it is not the same thing. The basic feminist approach is to select the method that will best help to answer a question. One method is not valued over another in itself. But in parapsychology, as anthropologist David Hess (1988) has shown, the experimental approach is valued above all others, and many questions simply are not asked because they are not amenable to the experimental method.

Our leaders justify this prejudice by saying that the scientific method itself is not amenable to investigating certain questions. Engaging in such conversations gives me a certain kind of experience. I feel as though my colleagues (usually male) and I are on a road leading to finding ways of investigating important questions. The road leads to the edge of a cliff. When we get there my colleagues swerve off to the left or right. Because the path goes straight, I keep on going, and I find myself

in silence, out in space, and alone. But I do not crash, and though it feels as though I am surrounded by invisible cotton wadding, this space I am in is palpable. It was not necessary to get off the path. It continues here, where I am, even though it now appears to be as much inner space as outer. The poet John Keats, according to Avens (1984), called it *negative capability*, or the capacity to be "in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (p. 2).

Feminist scientists, it appears from my reading, do not stop at the edge. They keep on going. They tend to adapt their methods to their questions, whereas in androcentric science, including parapsychology, there is a distinct tendency to adapt our questions to our methods. Moreover, as David Hess (1988) has pointed out, in androcentric science, including parapsychology, the approach is hierarchical, with the experimental method at the top and with qualitative and field studies, which are viewed as "softer" and more "feminine," in the missionary position. In the feminist approach, no one is on top. Methods are tools and one tries to choose, or if it is necessary, to invent, the right tool for the job at hand. The more tools we have, the better off we are. Joyce Nielsen (1990) captures what I am trying to express in the introduction to her exciting new survey of feminist research methods (Nielsen, 1990). In directing a women studies program, she says she "witnessed the sheer generative impact of focusing on women in all the disciplines. Mainstream knowledge seemed constricted, as if in an intellectual straitjacket, compared to the expansiveness and richness of feminist work" (p. vii). In reading about feminist approaches to science, I feel I have thrown off the straitjacket I donned when I became a parapsychologist. It is an expansive, exhilarating experience, and I recommend it to everyone, but especially to parapsychologists!

It would be a mistake to think that the feminist approach to science is separate from the mainstream thinking of our day. It is very much a part of it. Nielsen (1990) argues that feminist approaches "are perhaps the best part . . . of a larger intellectual movement that represents a shift away from traditional social science methodology" (p. 1). This movement has many names: post-positivistic, post-industrial, postmodern—Nielsen uses the term "postempiricist." It doesn't matter what labels are used: The reality is that the very grounds of our knowledge are being actively questioned in almost every discipline. I think this collapse of the old foundation is wondrous. It was far too

constricted and confining. Out of the rubble we can fashion new structures much better suited to our current needs.

Hoyt Edge (1982) as long ago as 1982 told parapsychologists: "There are new winds blowing in normal science toward new experimental methodology, so we ought to enjoy the breezes and learn from them" (p. 43). In his 1989 presidential address to the Parapsychological Association, he was able to insist: "Make no mistake, the face of science has changed" (Edge, 1990, p. 140). Within the feminist movement there is controversy over whether it would benefit feminist scientists to align themselves with the broader postmodern, postempirical movement. Many feminists warn that the postmodernists will prove to have attitudes toward feminist scientists that are similar to those of the androcentric scientists of the past. I don't know where I stand yet. I find both movements very exciting and potentially enriching for parapsychology. I think it is most likely that the theories of postmodernism are highly relevant to feminist science and vice versa, but the politics of the postmodernists may not be hospitable to feminist approaches, although there will always be exceptions: psychologist Kenneth Gergen (1988), for example.

As for parapsychology, I say we have not had a feminist approach until quite recently, even though women have been active in the field at least since 1882. To my knowledge, there is only one parapsychological publication about a feminist approach to parapsychology, and that is the paper David Hess gave at the 1988 convention of the Parapsychological Association. Because it is unique, I will review it in some detail.

Hess (1988) proposes that the division between experimental psi research and spontaneous case research reflects a gender bias. Spontaneous case research is to experimental research as female is to male. He also interprets the images used in the text of L.E. Rhine's *ESP in life and lab* for parapsychology, on the one hand, and for psi or psychics, on the other, as being related to notions of gender. Here parapsychology represents "culture and the male," whereas psi and psychics represent "nature and the female" (p. 344).

What Hess writes about spontaneous case research is especially relevant to the current situation in parapsychology. He says it "carnivalizes experimental parapsychology" (p. 349) because it "is both the opposite of experimental parapsychology and everything that it

rejects and has rejected. . . . It is both supplementary and subversive" (p. 349). He then goes on to propose that

if spontaneous case research is the graveyard of old paradigms, it is also the womb of new ones. A cultural critique of parapsychologists' ideology has the liberating effect of nurturing new ways of thinking and doing spontaneous case research, of helping to bring about a new paradigm that could reverse the hierarchy of experimental/case studies. (p. 350)

He proposes an experience-centered approach to spontaneous cases of psi that emphasizes the interpretation of their meaning rather than evidential validation. He asks: "Why not invoke the principle of cultural relativism and regard the percipient's testimony not as a roadblock to the question of evidentiality but instead as a text that invites interpretation and understanding?" (p. 351). This alternative approach of listening to experiential accounts he labels "female." Finally, he proposes an alternate foundation for spontaneous case research called the "cultural-therapeutic paradigm" (p. 351), which can be characterized as being postempirical.

The feminist approach to other areas of the sciences and humanities has consisted of two major thrusts: criticisms of the androcentric approach and the offering of new alternative or complementary/supplementary feminist approaches. With the exceptions of Alvarado, Hess, and Zingrone, this has not been done in the parapsychological literature. I think this conference itself could be the actual starting place for a consciously considered and publicly expressed introduction of a feminist approach to parapsychology.

However, at the same time that I say we have not had a distinctly feminist approach to parapsychology until recently, perhaps it would be better to say that while we have not had an explicitly feminist approach, down through the years and increasingly what can only now be recognized as elements of a feminist approach have been mentioned from time to time. I have tended to quote such contributions—many of them by males—in my own writings since 1980. It would be an interesting task to go back through our literature and see these passages in a new, more conscious light. I think what we are involved with here is not a "them or us" situation, but a more dialectical one in which feminists are challenging and criticizing the strictly androcentric view (a feminist approach, of course, can also be espoused by males; on the other hand,

women researchers, including many who are parapsychologists, go strictly by the male book). Feminist scientists are also presenting alternative approaches to complement and supplement the androcentric view. What we will come out with, in all sciences, one hopes, including parapsychology, will be new approaches acceptable to everyone that encompass both feminist and androcentric views, with the understanding that neither is complete without the other, and that the possibility exists that by combining the two something entirely new may come forth that will bring us closer to our desire for understanding than either one of them operating alone.

To begin with, the feminist approach to any individual science, whether that science be physical or behavioral, starts from a basic assumption that all knowledge is socially constructed—that is, it is based on a given personal, historical, social, and cultural context. This is a view that is gaining increased recognition in the writings of men as well as women (Collins & Pinch, 1982; Gergen, 1985, 1988; Hess, 1988). This is relevant because, along with the other sciences, I think parapsychology must come to acknowledge that it has been based on a given social and cultural context that in turn is viewed through the personal lens of the individual observer. Many parapsychologists at least recognize the personal element in their data, and because of our rather unique experimental paradigm of separating the subject from any sensory contact with the intended target, I think that we are in the best position of any science to investigate these personal observational effects. But when it comes to the recognition of the way our findings are linked to the broader historical, social, and cultural context, we are still not very concerned, and we have primarily limited ourselves to cross-cultural surveys.

The important thing here is not to study specific historical or cultural or social aspects of parapsychology, but to try to understand the underlying assumptions on which our work is based. This is a very difficult task, but Collins and Pinch (1982), for instance, have made a good start. They attempt to show that "evidence is so bound up with the society or social group which gives rise to it that theories held by members of radically different scientifico-social groups cannot be adequately tested against each other by experiment" (p. 184). What is important about this is that we can see how what we take to be obvious (i.e., "objective") is really personally, historically, socially, and

culturally determined. If we can deconstruct what we take to be our "givens," we can thereby gain immense freedom that would help us to obtain a more realistically objective stance—one that is viewed from the very beginning as necessarily conditional. We then can achieve the further objectivity of knowing that if the view to which we are individually partial is conditional, then there is probably just as much objectivity (and subjectivity) in other conditional views. When a sufficient number of conditional views are on the table, we may be able to group them into meaningful clusters and in this way begin to build a map of parapsychological findings the way one puts together a jigsaw puzzle.

I think increasingly science will be seen as consisting of several complementary standpoints or discourses (Gavey, 1989; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Smith, 1990; Wetherell, Stiven, & Potter, 1987). This is happening in other fields, and if parapsychology manages to stay alive long enough, it should eventually trickle on down to us as well. Jaggar (1983) defines "standpoint" as "a position in society from which certain features of reality come into prominence and from which others are obscured" (p. 382). Thus far, parapsychology's primary standpoint in English-speaking countries is the standard androcentric rational empiricist view. Parapsychology is radical only as regards the implications of its findings. Its methodology is archconservative. The field needs an infusion from a new—some *other*—source. I think the most likely "other" is that presented by the feminist standpoint. Nielsen (1990, pp. 24-25) points out that

Hartsock and feminist standpoint advocates argue that women are more able to see the viewpoints of both men and women, and thus a woman's understanding is potentially more complete, deeper, and more complicated. The implication for developing a specifically feminist epistemology is that a woman's perspective (if transformed through consciousness-raising) will lead to more accurate, more complex knowledge.

Or, one could say, the last shall be first!

I regard this conference as a wonderful opportunity for us to raise our consciousnesses concerning a feminist standpoint in parapsychology. As far as I know, no other women have done it before us. A major theme of some feminist standpoint theorists that we can use is the necessity for

dialogue. This, like analysis of variance, can be applied both within persons and between persons! In becoming good parapsychologists, women of necessity have had to ignore or deny their own intuitive promptings in order to identify with the androcentric line. We have to reopen that inner dialogue when we think to ourselves about psi. We *know* what the androcentric view is. Now we must discover our own views and then conduct imaginary dialogues with representatives of the other side. (For years I argued in my mind with J.B. Rhine. Now I tend to harangue with John Palmer and Rex Stanford.) The inner dialogue will help us to modify and improve our own position so that the next step would be to dialogue with actual people, and in our case, most likely male parapsychologists, though we might want to try the arguments out on each other first! The exciting thing about being a woman living in 1991 in an English-speaking country is that we can have the wonderfully freeing and rewarding experience of discovering that what we thought was only our own private idiosyncratic view, and therefore probably not worth thinking and certainly not worth presenting, is shared by half of the people living on our part of the planet. We are in an optimum position, to paraphrase feminist theorist Marcia Westkott, for the personal to become intellectual, and the intellectual to become personal (Westkott, 1983, p. 211). Actually, that isn't quite correct. Only those women *who have become conscious* of the feminist standpoint can be counted on to share our views—the other women still think like "one of the boys." But this is countered by the fact that some men also have raised consciousnesses, including some associated with parapsychology, such as Carlos Alvarado, Hoyt Edge, David Hess, and Steve Rosen.¹ I think the time has come to make a move.

¹ As I write this I think: What will they think, what will others think, if I categorize them as feminist parapsychologists? Am I doing them a disfavor rather than the compliment I intended? Will they be angry? Can *men* really be lumped with feminists? But a small voice says yes, it is so in other fields. A more strident voice points out that for years men thought nothing of listing a woman or two in support of the androcentric view! (Of course—the women would not object—they most likely were pleased *as persons*. I was!) So I welcome Carlos, David, Hoyt, and Steve as persons to our feminist camp! A third and stronger voice adds: And my welcome to you is an honor!

The unconscious assumption that we must become aware of at this conference is that parapsychology to date has represented women's views as well as men's because it is an objective science and because it is aimed at understanding the generic psi ability of humans—that which presumably lies beyond gender, although the possibility of sexual differences has been studied as an additional variable. This view itself is historically, socially, and culturally based, and has been held in common by every science. Until the last two decades, it has been taken for granted by both men and women. By means of this very important conference, some parapsychologists will openly describe and discuss the potential feminist contribution to parapsychology. We are probably the last science to do so, but in this we may be fortunate, for rather than fumbling in the dark, we may draw on the rich heritage of feminist science that has largely developed since the 1970s. I am compiling an ongoing bibliography of these studies and I would be glad to share it with anyone interested in having a copy.² Although much of the feminist research has involved new ways of looking at and studying women *from a woman's point of view*, the project of making women's experience the pivotal point is not to concentrate exclusively on Women as such. Rather, as sociologist Sue Wilkinson (1986) points out, it is "to utilize the female perspective to foster the development of a more genuinely *human* psychology; to deepen our understanding of the *whole* of human experience—both female and male" (p. 6).

And so it is with this conference. We have come together to apply our women's minds and our women's ways to looking at the problems and issues of parapsychology, not to fractionate our field further but to seek new ways of studying and understanding how and why psi occurs.

A feminist approach to any science is based on the assumption that "women's experiences, ideas and needs . . . are valid in their own right" (Duelli-Klein, 1983, p. 89). Research in a given area then involves a two-pronged approach: First, criticizing "androcentric theories that reflect sexist society, and of methods that constrain empirical research of significance to women" (Gould, 1980, p. 461). Second, methods and theories are developed and applied to a given subject that do reflect women's needs, ideas, and experiences.

² It is now 50 pages long and it lists 700 items, so it would be helpful if I could have \$5 to cover the costs of printing and mailing.

Broadly speaking, then, a feminist approach to parapsychology should begin by identifying and criticizing any one-sided androcentric biases in parapsychological methods, interpretations, and theories on the one hand, and by developing approaches to parapsychology that are outgrowths of women's experiences, ideas, and needs on the other.

Sue Wilkinson (1986), a British social psychologist, has offered the following criticisms of psychology. First, women are invisible, that is, ignored. Research is conducted on the assumption that men and women are the same and that generalizations can be applied to all participants regardless of gender. But, as Jessie Bernard (1973) has pointed out, "not only do men and women view a common world from different perspectives, they view different worlds as well" (p. 782). Applying this to parapsychology, we need to examine gender differences in male and female parapsychologists and in our subjects. Women parapsychologists need to really let their hair down and bracket the party line of parapsychology that they usually accept, and instead develop their own wish list of how they really think parapsychology should be studied. Special time to do this has been set aside on Sunday afternoon, but we should begin thinking *now* how we would really like to see parapsychology pursued. I suggest that those who will be presenting on Sunday afternoon should not try to think how women can contribute in a unique way to parapsychology. All of us already *are* women! What we need to is to go deep within *ourselves* and search out what each of us, as individuals, would love to see done in parapsychology. If we do that, we will ipso facto come up with fresh feminist approaches!

We also need to look for gender differences in attitudes toward psi, in lab and spontaneous psi experiments, and those persons considered to be psychic. Maybe psi, whether spontaneous or experimental, is experienced differently by males and females. Initially, at least, it might be worthwhile to study gender differences in addition to whatever other variable is being studied just to get some sort of baseline from which to build later gender studies.

But the standard line of the feminist approach to a given field is to ask of almost any finding or theory: "Does this fit the experience of women?" Nielsen (1990) points out that this question practically guarantees that new scholarship will be generated, because "such a query becomes a challenge (an anomaly) to the theory if the experience of women does not fit, a confirmation of it if it does, or an elaboration of

it if it does in some ways and not in others" (p. 23). She adds: "Feminist consciousness juxtaposed with knowledge of traditional disciplines is leading to new substantive theories and paradigms based on women's inclusion" (p. 21). Here I think the key word is "consciousness." The received view of psi is that it is unconscious. This is pretty much a given. If a woman were to apply her feminist consciousness to the problem of psi, would she agree, I wonder? As we know, the majority of psychics are women. I doubt that they feel that what they do is unconscious. Certainly Eileen Garrett did not. If we are going to advance in parapsychology, we must make conscious inroads on the unconscious. Here the androcentric approach of objectify, separate, and dissect can only result in studying the butterfly after we have killed it.

Nielsen (1990), drawing on Reinharz (1983), sums up the nature of feminist research as being "contextual, inclusive, experiential, involved, socially relevant, multimethodological, complete but not necessarily replicable, open to the environment, and inclusive of emotions and events as experienced" (p. 6). A feminist approach would be more practically oriented, and thus would not start out by killing the object of study. A feminist approach would involve empathy, intuition—possibly even psi—in the investigation itself. A feminist approach would try to communicate with the butterfly in the same way that Nobel prize winner Barbara McClintock communed with corn. Maccoll (1990) compared the feminist approaches to art and science as exemplified by Georgia O'Keeffe and Barbara McClintock, respectively. She notes that they both "share a view of nature in which inner and outer worlds are fused, subjects and objects blurred. It emphasizes fluidity and displays concern for detail, caring, and feeling, a combination often considered distinctively female" (p. 149). Maccoll points out that androcentric science

takes itself to be the province of the impersonal, the objective, the rational, the general. However, these ideals are not only far from neutral, they presume an investigating subject who is anonymous and alienated. . . . The mask of universality of both art and science involves an assumed neutrality compatible with a male point of view *but requiring self-denial for a woman* [italics added]. (p. 150)

Although all women scientists have endeavored to deny themselves so as to understand the tenets of androcentric science, rarely does it work the

other way around. After being recognized as a highly competent scientist (by male standards) in the 1930s and 1940s, in 1951 McClintock made her most important theoretical proposal—the transposition of genetic elements—but it was incomprehensible to her peers. When her theory was "rediscovered" decades later, she received the Nobel Prize. In the interim, she continued to investigate the genetics of maize, using what in essence was a feminist approach, although she herself argues that science is a neutral activity. Instead of searching for generalities, she evidenced a great interest in details. In Keller's biography of her, McClintock said: "The important thing is to develop the capacity to see one kernel that is different, and make that understandable" (Keller, 1983, p. xiii). She also developed a feeling of intimacy with her corn plants. She told Keller: "I start with the seedling, and I don't want to leave it. I don't feel I really know the story if I don't watch the plant all the way along. So I know every plant in the field. I know them intimately, and I find it a great pleasure to know them" (Keller, 1983, p. xiii). Moreover, this intimacy enabled her to see and understand in ways that probably would not otherwise be possible. An example is her work with the chromosomes of red bread mold, which are very tiny. She told Keller:

I found that the more I worked with them the bigger and bigger [they] got, and when I was really working with them I wasn't outside, I was down there. I was part of the system. I was right down there with them, and everything got big. I even was able to see the internal parts of the chromosomes—actually everything was there. It surprised me because I actually felt as if I were right down there and these were my friends. (Keller, 1983, p. 117)

If science means to know, then I think this is how science should be. So only can we understand, that is, be with what we are studying. If you really want to understand, you can't stay outside—you must know from within.

I would hope that at the least such an approach would lead to new methods and would raise the level of research consciousness in dealing with psi. At the higher end of the spectrum, it might even take us inside the psi process itself. Dare I imagine a day when a criterion for becoming a full member of the Parapsychological Association, along with the ability to kill and properly dissect the butterfly of psi, would be to be able to demonstrate a creditable level of double vision—of being

both inside the process as well as outside? If it is to be, then it will take women to make it happen! Let's make a good start in these next two days.

We need, first and foremost, to ask ourselves how women can contribute to parapsychology in ways that men have not done to any extent or in any significant numbers. (I am not saying men can't do anything women might think to do—but I don't think they can be expected to lead the way.) Since 1882 we have unconsciously followed a methodology devised by males. We now need to draw on our experiences of being female, both conscious and unconscious, to see if we can achieve the balanced approach that Beverly Rubik calls for so eloquently in her paper. As women, we need to give serious consideration to what we each, as individuals, would like to do. As I said earlier in this paper, we don't have to try to think what "women" in the abstract would do. We need only to please ourselves. It might help to imagine each of us is in charge of a laboratory staffed only by women. What sorts of questions would we investigate? What methodologies would we use? Give your fantasy full play. Pull out all the stops! Write it down or tape it. Then share it with us tomorrow afternoon.

Then, back in the real world, keep that agenda in your mind and in your heart. Think of it as a 100-mile journey. It is not likely in this world as it is now constituted that any of us will go the whole distance. But it is important to go even a quarter of a mile. Whatever distance we can make toward our goal will by that much contribute to parapsychology's wholeness; it can also serve as a starting point for other women who can then go that much further toward the goal one of us has imagined. Wherever each one of us starts individually, we will begin to meet like-minded women and form clusters as we go. There are some men who will be with us even at the beginning, and more of them, too, as we go. Assuming that our approach, which will likely be pluralistic, will indeed help to genuinely shed new light on the nature of psi, as we get nearer the end there will be men and women together, one group, with differing emphases. And, I hope, we'll all know more about psi than we have for the past 110 years.

I would like to close by offering my general impression of the relevance of feminist science to parapsychology based on what I have read thus far. To be blunt, I think we are beating a dead horse in parapsychology. I see our field as a tiny room used to store and study

outdated methods and ideas. This room is housed in the basement of the old structure of knowledge that is now collapsing. This room is so far from the real action of our times that the people working there apparently don't even know the world outside has collapsed! Meanwhile, up above where people are dealing with the collapse of the old, there are strong positive winds blowing away the dust and smoke. Lots of people are still alive, and they seem very productive and happy. They are building new structures; they are laughing and sharing; they are feeling fortunate to be alive in the very best of times, for they are building a new world, one in which there is much less separation than in the past between inside and outside, subjective and objective, Eastern and Western, art and science, the realm of "facts" and the realm of "values," and between male and female. I think J.B. and Louisa Rhine, if they were present, would be applauding this industry, at the same time that they would be impatiently gesturing to the parapsychologists, who are voluntarily buried in the basement, to come on up and out into the sunlight and breathe the air that is vibrant with change. They would be shouting: "We know we insisted that experiments were the most important thing, but we were only following the tenor of our times! You too must move with the process!" Gardner Murphy, if he were present, would be one big grin. He would happily observe that what was taking place was right in line with his hopes and dreams. And Eileen Garrett, if she were present, would smile and nod, for she would have known all along that it would have to turn out this way!

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DISCUSSION

UTTS: This is something that I have been struggling with myself. I would like to know your opinion of where you think the experimental method should fit into psi research.

WHITE: Well, it seems to me that right now we don't know where it should fit in. It seems to me it must have a place. I have emphasized experiential approaches myself, simply because I'm trying to offset the bias, sort of push it over the other way. But it seems to me that there's got to be a genuine role for experiments in parapsychology. But I think it has got to be more interactive; that is, we must go at it from both subject and experimenter sides, and maybe even the whole surround, much more than we have been doing. And I think this calls for very complex designs, and I think we really should stop just plowing ahead as we have been doing. Instead, we need to sit back and rethink our position and try to come up with new ways; and then see to which part of the puzzle the experimental approach would be most amenable, and only then do experiments. But I think that by stressing experiments and also by putting it on top and saying how you are not going to follow up on many other possibilities or approaches simply because a situation is not amenable to the experimental approach is a big mistake.

UTTS: I certainly agree with that. In fact, I see an interaction, as I'll say in my paper, an interdisciplinary team where some people are out there. . .

WHITE: Good. That's a very good idea.

UTTS: . . . in the field and others are in the lab.

WHITE: Because really it is pretty hard for one person to fall fully in line with both approaches at once. We definitely need both sides.

BLACKMORE: I have known Rhea for a long time, but never very well as we live on opposite sides of the Atlantic. If you read our papers I expect most people think that we are worlds apart in what we think. And yet, we write to each other sometimes and discover these things that we have in common that seem odd, given the different positions that we are coming from. So, I would like to know what you think of my reaction to the last point you've made. This image of science collapsing and there is parapsychology in the basement—a very powerful image

with a lot of truth in it, I think. But why are we down in that basement? And why are we clinging to everything so tightly, building these walls, being defensive?

A lot of us live our lives in an undefensive way trying to let go, trying to be open to experience, and struggling to make a science out of that. And yet, here we have this basement approach where we do quite the opposite and defend ourselves. Now, it seems to me that there is one very important piece of wall there that we don't need and that is the whole concept of psi. Parapsychology is based on the whole concept of psi. It is based on this idea of defining normal and paranormal. That is a very masculine definition. These things are science. You can do them properly. You can study them in these ways. You can apply these techniques to them. These other things are beyond—they are paranormal.

We all know how impossible it is to draw that line properly. We all know the criticisms for 60 or 70 years, that no one can really define psi properly. It is negatively defined and so on. And yet we have clung to this. There it stands, this big wall. Now, I'm usually taken as arguing that there is no such thing as psi; actually, that is not really my argument. My argument is that the whole concept is completely misguided and we don't need it. Let's forget it. Now, how about crawling out of the basement, saying that is what the basement was. Let's crawl out of there.

Where would we crawl to? We might have to lose a lot. We would lose our "we are parapsychologists" label because we wouldn't any longer have this wall that defined us as something different. And yet, surely, we've got a lot, haven't we? We've been trying to talk about experiences that other people call paranormal (though we don't have to). We have been trying to do a science that actually relates at one end to mystical experience, to which many scientists would say "that's a lot of rubbish."

So that is what I would like to do, crawl out of the basement of having the concept of psi at all. And I would appreciate your comments on that.

WHITE: I think you're very right. I certainly think the search for evidence of psi is part of the wall that we have made, and I think the reason that we are clinging to or staying in the basement is that we are so intent on being known as scientists and being perceived as scientists

that we want to hold on to that before all else. And I think that is a mistake. I have trouble giving it up. I empathize with a lot of what you say, but I don't think I'm quite ready to take the step of saying "we are not different from anybody else." It would really be abolishing parapsychology as such, it seems to me. I don't know if I'm ready to do that, but I do join you in thinking that it is not necessary to prove these experiences because I don't think that one can. I think we need the psi hypothesis still, simply to differentiate what we are studying—the "paranormal" or whatever other label—from the mystical or whatever. Maybe it isn't necessary; I don't know. I think that is one of the things we must deal with. I think you raise a very important question. If I had to choose, if somebody were to come up to me and say that that is truly what is keeping us in the basement—I think there are a lot of factors keeping us in the basement—but if that were the main wall, then I would say, yes, let's get rid of the concept of psi so that we can go on studying these experiences that people label psychic. But how are you going to do that without coming up with another term just like psi? That is my problem. I would like to have help, too, in answering the question.

RUBIK: I'd like to address that. As you will see in my paper, which will follow shortly, I think the most peculiar thing about parapsychology is that it starts from the notion of the separation of mind and matter. Then it proceeds to show that this is invalid. It starts with this basic premise of conventional science and then shows that there is some interaction between mind and matter. I think we need to reconsider that it conveys a Newtonian interaction of discrete bodies coming together, bumping, what have you. Furthermore, this limits our conceptualization to local interactions. We have to be very careful with our language because of how it shapes our thinking. I really think we need to reframe the interrelationship between mind and matter. That is where the action should be to move forward in parapsychology. We need to recreate language and come to know or understand mind/matter as process or continuum, and then psi will not look paranormal. It will simply be a normal aspect of reality. And I think it has the potential to become an integral part of science instead of standing alone as a quirky field looking at small anomalies. I think that is the key.

WHITE: Sue, you had something else to say right? Didn't you?

BLACKMORE: Yes, I did. I forgot quite what it was. No, I know what it was. That you have renamed your work to be *exceptional human*

experience, and I sense in that something like trying to say, well, if these are the experiences we want to study we don't have to draw the line by saying, "Is it psi or is it not psi." Rather, here is a cluster of things we want to study. This is really the same thing that I was also saying.

WHITE: That is true.

ZINGRONE: In terms of the language, one of the things that struck me when you were talking was Dave Hess's point of reversing the hierarchy. Is that what we are really arguing for, a kind of broader even than cultural—a broadened pluralism in which we should not even be using terms like hierarchy, in which we should not be trying to take one methodology and push it up over another methodology. We need to have language that shows that what we are really focussing on is the need for a mosaic of different approaches to different scientific problems, and different approaches to different personal temperaments in terms of doing research and understanding scholarship. In your reading of literary criticism in the postmodernist discourse, do they talk about how one might strip out some of this inherent male terminological hierarchy from the discourse itself?

WHITE: Yes, I think there is some stuff on that in the literature, and I have not read it in detail. One of the frustrating things about having the conference this year is that I have this mountain of material to read and I wanted to zero in initially just on the psychology part of it, but it is going to take me many months to get through all this stuff, and so for a while I was completely blocked. Here is all this stuff I want to bring forth and there was my deadline for this conference. So I can't answer you specifically right now; but, yes, in reading chapter headings and reading abstracts and from some of what I have read I think definitely that question is addressed and I hope to learn more about it in the coming year. I cannot give you specifics right now, though.

SCHLITZ: One of the challenges to this deconstructionist approach is to account for the dominance of the male paradigm. I'm thinking of, say, molecular genetics right now, and the amazing, remarkable advances that are being made. And how do we justify equal position relative to that kind of powerful tool or approach?

WHITE: I don't know what is going on in that field right now. Could you be a little bit more specific?

SCHLITZ: I'm thinking of the predictability in the mapping of genes, for example; and we talk about these relative realities, or relative truths.

And yet it seems to me that some of the advances that are being made in the hard sciences are truly leading us to some more fundamental principles. And I think that as a deconstructionist, we need to deal with the fact that there may be some legitimate reasons for the domination of that particular model.

WHITE: I think if we were to work on relative truths it would be a very freeing thing to do, and I think that is sort of what Sue was talking about. Instead of trying to say you have got to find this absolute fact or datum that we could build on, it is going to stay there, it is never going to move and it is going to be granite, is not realistic because I don't think that reality is that way. I think that it is more like stepping stones as one goes across a stream. Everything is provisional and you have to step on the stone while it's there because 10 minutes later it may be washed away. But if you want to get across the stream, you have to continue to take these provisional steps. And I think it's important. I think they are really sort of symbolic steps, because when we think to ourselves and we communicate to others, we are really just using symbols. I think we have to build our approach—and that is really what Beverly was saying about new language. It is very important not to look for bedrock but to look for provisional steps, and then we can fall in with the dance and move.

RUBIK: Excuse me, may I address what she said? Marilyn, I think it is absolutely true what you are saying. I think contemporary science—microbiology, physics, etc.—deals with the vast masculine powers within nature. However, we have not had a scientific approach to the gentler aspects of the universe. I think that is the issue. Yes, I think that the dominant paradigm, the masculine ideology of science, certainly seems to be appropriate within the context of what they are looking at. But I don't think it is appropriate to asking questions of the gentler, more subtle aspects of the universe, such as psi.

BLACKMORE: I would like to address Marilyn's point too, because I think it's absolutely crucial. If I have understood you right, Marilyn, you are addressing the problem that if you take a relativist truth view on everything, you cannot do any kind of science at all. Taking it to this extreme, what makes one theory better than another? You're saying there are lots of sciences in which one theory is better than another because it leads to classical prediction and control, and to all kinds of advances that we actually want and we actually use.

So, it seems to me we don't want to sit here, saying "oh, wow, we're all going to be relative truth theorists." That is not going to get us anywhere. We might have a nice time. Where is the meeting point? Where is the way that we can bring these things together? Do we have a contribution as women that makes us more able to bring these together? I hope so. I would like to take as an example something of particular interest to me, which is near-death experiences. Let's take the tunnel as an example. Going down the tunnel toward the light is a difficult experience to describe. It has extraordinary effects on people. It sounds very simple, and yet it can be quite profound and lead to big changes in people and their attitudes toward themselves and to other people, and so on. I've done some work showing, I think, that the tunnel arises because there is a very simple way that the cells are laid out in the visual cortex.

Now, I'm often taken as saying "it's all in the brain; it's not interesting; it's not mystical; it's not of interest to parapsychology." Then when I talk about the mystical aspects of it and the transformation qualities of it, the CSICOP people jump on me and say: "What are you doing talking about this? You're supposed to be sticking to the physiology." What I would like to see is us being able to bring together a scientific approach to things like that within parapsychology, where we can look at physiological substrates, take at face value the experiences people have, and also learn to have experiences. This way we could bring together our own experience with our own science, which is something that I have always tried to do, and it isn't very easy. I think there was something in your paper, Rhea, that set me off thinking. Sorry, I've forgotten what it was. But I hope that that is the way to go rather than to stick to just a relative truth. It's difficult. One meets objections from both ends.

WHITE: Sounds very good to me.

SCHLITZ: In those three responses, I see a danger in us marginalizing our own contribution in the sense that the place of the female perspective is in these softer areas. I think that is a danger, in that we need to challenge or integrate the perspective right there in the more predictive aspects of science as well as in the softer areas. That is the real challenge to a feminist perspective, I think, meeting these real predictable, controllable aspects.

WHITE: But not in a hierarchical sense where the harder aspect is the one on top and in charge and we just have to come along and hope

we can get in a little bit here and there. I think that each side has to be seen as coequal.

BLACKMORE: Isn't it the pluralism that we have to offer, not the softness? Or not exclusively the softness?

HUGHES-HARTOGS: This is in no sense a speech, simply a comment. I'd like to draw our attention also to the fact that the experimental approach that has been described very frequently induces an ivory tower sort of effect. And as far the community is concerned, which is an aspect that I've been particularly concerned with at Edinburgh University, many of the comments that you made really hit home. I have sat through innumerable dull meetings of the Society of Dowsers, of the Society for Psychical Research, and others, but one of the things that comes through loud and clear is an almost impenetrable wall in relation to what is going on as far as the experimental approach is concerned that is really of any practical use to many of us who have had many rather interesting personal experiences. How do you get the two together? I'm particularly aware of this now because of some of the things that I heard only last Saturday in a meeting of the Edinburgh Society of Dowsers.

And I would also like to mention that at that meeting the one thing that really sparked the entire group was the fact that a participant had seen Bonnie Prince Charlie yesterday, and his stallions and his horsemen, apparently stamping impatiently outside the Sheeps Head Inn in Duddingston, which is a little village very close to Edinburgh. I think half the Society for Psychical Research people intended to be there next year at the anniversary of the famous battle of Preston Pans. I've spread the news at the department; I don't know whether anybody got out there, but I thought that you might like to know what you had missed!

WHITE: Sorry about that! I think you're very right that it's essential that we involve ourselves in the whole surround of our field, and it certainly includes the people who are having experiences. And if what we're doing is not speaking to them at all, then I don't think we are doing it right. I don't think it is simply that we in our ivory tower and with our great knowledge have no need of these people and have gone beyond them; I think it points to something wrong with what we are doing.