

SUMMARY OF THE CONFERENCE

EMILIO SERVADIO

It would be unthinkable to actually summarize a conference such as this one, which is now approaching its end. We have been presented with a downright avalanche of names, facts and figures, and any attempt to condense all this material would be futile. My task, therefore, as I understand it, will be to try to point out some trends that seem to emerge from all the work that is being done in these intense days.

First of all, I think it was an excellent idea for all of us to get some direct, solid information about what our parapsychological colleagues are doing and pursuing East or West, North or South. Some of the information that has been offered to us was quite new and even surprising—at least to some of the participants. I, for one, was struck by the news that, in Finland, a Society for Psychical Research was founded as early as 1907; but even more, perhaps, when I learned that in California there are at least twenty-five societies for psychical research—under various names, of course!

Another important item has come out of the Conference, i.e., that most researchers in most countries (perhaps in all countries) are faced with more or less the same problems—practical and theoretical—as Dr. Ryzl has clearly pointed out in his presentation. The situation of parapsychology *vis-à-vis* the academic bodies and the universities raises difficulties in Japan as well as in France, in Johannesburg no less than in Stockholm. However, there are also signs everywhere that the scene is slowly changing. I'll just mention a few of these signs that were recently brought to our attention: the acceptance of parapsychological work in some British universities; university courses in Toronto, Canada; the connections—in spite of the ups and downs described by Dr. Musso—of some leading parapsychologists in Argentina with several universities; the courses in universities and other academic bodies given by prominent California parapsychologists; the work done at official or semi-official levels in Johannesburg and Capetown, also the Ph.D. obtained at Pretoria University with a thesis on ESP; the Italian doctoral degrees bestowed by some universities to

students who have presented theses on parapsychological subjects, and also the oncoming Conference on Psychiatry and Parapsychology at the University of Modena, Italy; work in parapsychology done by Japanese students within their own universities; and the work which has been done and is continuing in such parapsychologically famous places as Utrecht in Holland or Freiburg in Germany, at recognized and official levels.

If we now turn to the actual work—experimental or otherwise—that has been achieved or is being done in the countries represented in this Conference, we have a *prima facie* reason to be favorably impressed. Here again, it would be foolish and repetitious to go into details and I shall only remind you of some landmarks in our international panorama. In England, in spite of the rather pessimistic picture given to us by Dr. West, we have the Randall experiments with small animals and the even more interesting attempts of Brookes-Smith to provoke PK effects by diverting the attention of the experimenters. In California there are Targ's ESP teaching machine and Vogel's researches on the "emotions of plants," plus, of course, the repercussions on the West Coast of the Ted Serios phenomenon—not to speak of the personal activity of Dr. Milan Ryzl. You have all heard of the various experimental endeavors of Japanese parapsychologists among others: research on correlations between ESP and skin resistance, or body temperature, or call-intervals, or other subjective or objective conditions of the subjects. In India, besides the experimental activity at Waltair, some plans have been made to study the possible relationships between psi and Yogic training. I was rather impressed by the work done in Israel, linking trends of modern experimental psychology to possible psi interferences and effects. The three main prongs of the German parapsychological fork as presented by Professor Bender—experiments on animals, on precognition in dreams, on paranormal interferences in tape recordings—are good examples of serious and painstaking work. Nothing *very* new seems to go on in Russia as we have all heard, but it appears that what is being done in Leningrad with the "electric aura," in Moscow with telepathy and speed variations, and in Sverdlovsk with finger-reading has to be taken into serious account. I do not know how many of you had an idea of the good work which is being done in South Africa, and I need only mention, besides the Bleksley "clock-waking" experiments, mass ESP, poltergeist activity, studies in ESP distortion, radiesthesia, etc., the fascinating investigation of the so-called out-of-the-body experiences such as have been described and philosophically commented on in a scholarly fashion by Dr. Poynton. Swiss parapsychologists, reasonably cautious *vis-à-vis* their audiences,

appear to cover with a grand angular vision the ample field of their investigations. In Argentina, in spite of all the strife and difficulties that you have heard about, we see a constant deepening and refining of the statistical quantitative approach in the experimental study of ESP, also the work in progress related to the grandiose, although not yet concluded, "Antartida experiments." About Holland, besides what is being done in Utrecht by Professor Tenhaeff and his collaborators, we heard from Dr. Kappers what has been or is being achieved with psychedelic substances, inquiries on spontaneous cases, and several other lines of research. Dr. Cassoli has reported the activity of the Bologna Center of which he has always been the most dynamic promoter. He mentioned studies on precognition, on the growing of fungi, on fire-walking, on alleged cases of poltergeist activity, etc. Dr. Duplessis gave us a very impressive report on what is happening in France in at least six different experimental directions, namely psychokinesis, clairvoyance, psi phenomena connected with blindness, qualitative telepathy, quantitative studies of ESP, and induced precognition. It really seems as if parapsychology in France is going through a new Golden Age, reminding all and sundry of the glorious times of Richet, Geley, Osty and other pioneers. Needless to say, my references have been all too scanty, and I apologize for their almost telegraphic character. May I now add something Dr. Rush has mentioned in his most valuable paper, namely the Ullman-Krippner-Feldstein experiments on induced telepathic dreams, the experimental work of Douglas Dean and collaborators with plethysmographic techniques, the Osis and Turner observations on telepathy at a distance, or telepathy and time—and I am more and more convinced that I have left out plenty of my description of this extraordinary parapsychological fair.

Faced as we now are with this impressive array of facts, results, and work in progress, we ought apparently to be satisfied, convinced that we are on the right track, and that all we have to do is to go on in the same direction. But in all earnestness, we all know that this is not the case.

Elements of dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs in parapsychology have been expressed by more than one colleague. In this Conference, among others, Dr. West made it quite clear that he was far from being satisfied, and I remember very well that in a previous Conference, he remarked that the "phenomena" seemed to fade away under closer scrutiny. Similar views were expressed by others. The day before yesterday, Dr. Ryzl even more openly stated that in his opinion, phenomena seemed to be somehow disappearing, and also expressed

his concern, and his feeling that no decisive step forward in parapsychology had been made in recent years.

Dr. Dommeyer's views were also significant in this respect. He condemned the "isolating" approach to parapsychology, and said that if we look at them closely, psi phenomena are socio-culturally conditioned, which is saying that we cannot and should not look at them independently of the historical and cultural frame of reference in which they take—or do not take—place. On a different occasion, as I remember, I myself said that it is not by chance that within certain historical and socio-cultural conditions, subjects and phenomena such as have been studied by Richet, Morselli or Schrenck-Notzing were taking place, whereas nowadays we have to go after them, rarified as they are, with the help of the Zener cards, random numbers, thousands of trials, and the statistical approach. It was also refreshing to hear from Dr. Dommeyer that in California new ways of dealing with psi phenomena are considered or adopted nowadays, apart and also away from the more traditional views, in such a fashion as to justify the statement that, as he put it, a parapsychological sun is now rising in the West.

However, in this very Conference we heard several statements, all showing that also the East, once more, had something to suggest and to teach. Prof. Otani recalled the noble traditions of Japan, from original shamanism to Chinkon and Shingon and, finally, to Zen and Zazen Buddhism. He also reminded us of contemporary authors such as Iritani, Suzuki, Chiba and others who are exponents of Japan's philosophy and wisdom, and whose writings certainly have definite parapsychological implications. As I said on a previous occasion, I was impressed by the personal *Erlebnis* of Professor Fukurai, who finally decided that Buddhism contained the final answer to the main questions that had first oriented him toward precise parapsychological investigations.

Dr. Prasad reminded us of the traditions of India, and recalled that in those traditions, psi occurrences had always been taken into consideration, although the Indian sages had never looked at them as something to be particularly pursued or praised.

Such considerations, it must be said, are by no means alien nowadays in Western parapsychology—even apart from what comes to us from the American West Coast. Studies about altered states of consciousness, obtained with manifold methods, with or without the use of drugs, have been made and assembled by several parapsychologists all over the world. I was extremely impressed by the fact that a prominent researcher like Dr. Rush—who is certainly neither a dreamer nor

a mystic—gave due attention in his survey to Yoga practices, meditation techniques, and in general, to ways and means aimed at getting psi under the control of conscious volition. I was also in complete agreement with him when he stated that in his opinion, the views of Lawrence LeShan were to be considered with the utmost respect and attention. LeShan, as you have heard, thinks that the “world of psi” is just a “different” world, rather similar to the world of the mystics, seers, etc., also similar to the world according to the views of some modern physicists, and not necessarily less “real” than the world we perceive in our everyday experience. Here, of course, I am reminded of what Dr. Poynton had to say about reality, and the necessity of getting away from a limited, all too empirical concept of what is “real” in the usual sense of the word.

I have come to think that, perhaps, an answer to our query will come out of such views as have found expression here and there during this Conference, together with all the information about experimental activity in the well known, modern and solid Western tradition. It was after all a Western philosopher and psychologist, William James, who said that most probably, other kinds of experiences existed, unknown to us, but divided from our own usual experiences by very thin screens or barriers. And was it not William James (as quoted by Allan Angoff) who pointed out that we with our lives are like trees in the forest, with their roots underground, unaware of something uniting them—a “something” that has also been called a totally different state of consciousness, the Collective Unconscious, “cosmic consciousness,” and the like?

This “different” world, or state of consciousness, or other side of things, has been hinted at by innumerable seers, men of wisdom, poets, novelists. I am reminded of the descriptions of a world “the other side of the looking-glass” in the second part of *Alice in Wonderland*, of such mysterious lands as Thule, Atlantis or Montsalvat—all symbolic descriptions of different possible ways of perceiving “reality,” of seeing things in ways that seem more akin to the world of ESP, and of parapsychological experience in general, than of the empirical, “classical,” scientific coordinates into which we have tried and are trying to squeeze them.

I for one have, needless to say, the greatest respect for science. I think that the “Protocommunication” of Dr. Puharich was a formidable tour de force of pure scientific thinking. It had profundity, it had splendor. And it is almost superfluous for me to state, most emphatically, that not for one moment has it come to my mind that we should relinquish science, the scientific attitude, the scientific method

in parapsychology. I wish that there should be no misunderstanding on this point. However, we should not forget that science, as we know it nowadays, is the product of a certain attitude of the mind, and that, as such, it may have neglected some traditional Weltanschauungen, putting these into the same wastepaper basket where we rightly find sheer superstitions and queer beliefs of old. A modern philosopher and essayist, Titus Burckhardt, has tried to reestablish a balance in a book which I strongly recommend to your attention, *Modern Science and Traditional Wisdom*.

It has been for a long time my conviction, and I found it borne out in this Conference, that parapsychology is struggling—in a largely unconscious way—to rediscover some lost truths. Perhaps, as I said, the answer to our present dissatisfaction with our own achievements—such as has been expressed by some of us here—lies in this direction: making ourselves more aware of such truths, of the existence of another side of the coin, of the complementarity between our world this side and another world the other side of the looking-glass. This is what I wanted to say when I expressed the view, the other day, that in order to know more in parapsychology, and to get over the impasse lamented by such prominent researchers as Ryzl, or West, we should perhaps pursue inner changes in us, the observers, getting more and more familiar with the beyond in our very depths, approaching the world of psi by prodding our inner paths, by becoming “intronauts”—to use a word which was invented by a lady-poet of my acquaintance.

I mentioned a moment ago the term “complementarity.” This is certainly not the same thing as the “schizoid state” jokingly mentioned by Dr. Rush to characterize the attitude a parapsychologist ought to adopt. Complementarity does not mean division: it means union of the opposites. Again, the ancient traditions with their imperishable symbols give us some cues: the Star of David—the “Mogen David”—with its two opposite triangles; the Yin-Yang of the Far East with its black and white “commas” inscribed into the circumference; and, of course, the Cross. Let us be humble, and accept the idea that we should not be unilateral, that we ought to keep in mind the *two* branches of the Cross, the *two* commas of the Yin-Yang, the *two* triangles of the Mogen David.

One of the last works of Eileen J. Garrett has a significant title: *Many Voices*. Eileen Garrett had the deepest respect for science, for her scientific collaborators, for all those who investigated her gifts with the most modern, refined, scientific means. However, although always cautiously, and never completely committed, she also had the deepest

respect for those entities which she called her "controls," also for other important agencies which were contents of her particular inner world, for "voices" which spoke to her with the same "reality" quality, and the same impact, as the voices of her relatives, friends, and co-workers.

"Many Voices," as we have heard here. Not *one* voice. Many sides to our query. Once more, we have to get some inspiration from the exceptional personality that made it possible for us all to be here, exchange views, go back to our usual work more assured and with more energy.

One day, Eileen told me—and I heartily agreed—that perhaps, our whole approach in parapsychology, our constant putting an object in front of us, had to be modified, and that the old saying, "Know thyself," was just as cogent as the other, typically scientific tenet, "Know the object of thine Search."

I shall end with a quotation from a well-known scholar, a student of Eastern traditions, Sir Arthur Avalon: "If we would know what some other than ordinary experience is, we must actually shift not our speculative thought on to it but our being into it."

This, Mr. Chairman, Mrs. Coly, Mrs. Bolton, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends and Colleagues, is the end of my effort, and the gist of what I could reap out of the magnificent orchard presented to our attention and reflection by this Twentieth International Conference of the Parapsychology Foundation. Thank you.