

INTRODUCTION

ALLAN ANGOFF: Mrs. Garrett, Mrs. Bolton, Ladies and Gentlemen: On behalf of the President and trustees of the Parapsychology Foundation, I am glad to declare open the Nineteenth International Conference of the Foundation. You have come great distances for these three days of deliberations and discussions here in the hills of southern France. We of the Foundation are grateful for your cooperation during the many months when these meetings were being planned.

We are to discuss parapsychology today and during the past century—the continuing doubts, the continuing affirmations in many areas of the psychic. We shall explore these areas anew—sometimes critically, sometimes even with very great skepticism. And I think you will agree that it is good that we do so, particularly at a time when parapsychology—the paranormal—is undergoing (I will not say enjoying) what the Americans call a great boom.

Now how far have we really advanced? Has the paranormal now become established, proven, replete with the once elusive factual data sought so avidly for the past century by so many workers in laboratories and universities? We may be excused, I think, if we remain somewhat skeptical about this new boom when we recall the pioneers, the great figures of parapsychology who, in a sense, look down upon us this morning.

We should note also that we meet in the land where Bernheim and Liébeault, Charcot, Richet and Anton Mesmer carried on their great work. We meet also, I think we can say, in the shadow of such men as William McDougall, J. B. Rhine and other workers in America. Above all, we are cognizant here of the men and women who founded the Society for Psychical Research in London almost a century ago. We recall here this morning such people as Lord Balfour, Eleanor and Henry Sidgwick, Frederick Myers, Frank Podmore, Sir William Barrett, as well as others who worked outside the Society, I am thinking particularly of Hewat McKenzie of the London College of Psychic Science among others.

It is well to bring in here the name of a towering figure in the history of parapsychology. I refer, of course, to William James. Sixty years ago in an essay called "The Final Impressions of a Psychological Researcher" which appeared in the *American Magazine*, he remarked that Henry Sidgwick, one of the founders of the London Society for Psychological Research, told him how unbelievable it was that after twenty years of rigid scientific research and experiment so little progress had been made in unlocking the paranormal, and that he, Henry Sidgwick, was in the identical state of doubt as when the SPR was founded.

"My own experience," continued William James, "has been similar to Sidgwick's. For twenty-five years I have been in touch with the literature of psychical research and have had acquaintance with numerous 'researchers.' I have also spent a good many hours (though far fewer than I ought to have spent) in witnessing (or trying to witness) phenomena. Yet I am theoretically no 'further' than I was at the beginning; and I confess that at times I have been tempted to believe that the Creator has eternally intended this department of nature to remain *baffling*, to prompt our curiosities and hopes and suspicions all in equal measure, so that, although ghosts and clairvoyances, and raps and messages from spirits, are always seeming to exist and can never be fully explained away, they also can never be susceptible of full corroboration. . . . It is hard to believe, however, that the Creator has really put any big array of phenomena into the world merely to defy and mock our scientific tendencies; so my deeper belief is that we psychical researchers have been too precipitate with our hopes and that we must expect to mark progress not by quarter-centuries, but by half-centuries or whole centuries."

With those words of William James, we might well begin this conference. But we could hardly do so without noting the presence here of a scientific psychical worker who is very much in the tradition of William James. I refer to the founder of the Parapsychology Foundation, our gracious hostess. Our meetings here are made possible through her imagination and foresight. She is very much a part of the illustrious list I have noted earlier. I refer, of course, to Eileen J. Garrett, and I am going to ask her to greet you before we begin our meetings.

GREETINGS

EILEEN J. GARRETT: May I thank you personally for coming from so many distant places to participate in this conference. Some of you regard yourselves as skeptics, and I understand you very well, for I also feel very strange here and I am perhaps the most skeptical of all of us. I have been told that I have been producing psychic phenomena for many years, but I still ask myself, "What am I doing?" How do I know what I am producing or what my other personalities—Uvani and Abdul Latif—are saying? I think Uvani prepares the way, and when there are subjects that seem impossible for him to take care of, he passes them on to Abdul Latif. And so I have for years lived and dealt with these two conflicting people. What pleases me most is that I have at least gathered together scientists in the service of parapsychology. These scientists are, in my opinion, the only people who may be able to give us the beginnings of some answers to the great enigmas of psychical research. Let me say again that I am the worst skeptic of all. I look forward to listening to you during the next few days. Again, thank you for coming here.

ANGOFF: Thank you very much, Mrs. Garrett. The co-founder of the Parapsychology Foundation, the long time friend of Eileen J. Garrett, a woman who saw the importance of the Foundation which brings us together today, and proceeded with Mrs. Garrett to give it vitality despite her arduous duties in the Congress of the United States, where she served with distinction for almost three decades, is fortunately with us today.

I am glad to present the Honorable Frances P. Bolton.

FRANCES P. BOLTON: You who have come here for the first time know something of the excitement of this meeting, but you don't know what it is to come back here after many absences because of other duties. And I, with Mrs. Garrett, welcome you with—oh, so much deep feeling. To me the whole area of parapsychology—it is worldwide, it is

universe-wide—is something that the future must understand. So that for us who are trying—and all of us here in this room are—it is a wonderful opportunity to get together, to argue, to discuss, to say, “I don’t believe a word of it,” and “Oh, yes, but I do,” and it will be a wonderful few days in this exquisite spot. Our meeting has been made possible through so many people, in different ways, but most of all by Mrs. Garrett. We’re grateful to have Dr. Servadio here really carrying us along; he does it so well and so charmingly. We’re grateful also to all of you for coming, some from a very great distance.

I think perhaps I am the one who is oldest among you in knowing Mrs. Garrett. We’ve been friends for many years. We have worked together and I can never express the appreciation and gratitude I’ve had for her for what life has given me of wide experience in some of these matters, from the narrow place I’ve had to work to getting to something bigger. And I do again say, Thank you, Mrs. Garrett, for everything you’ve been to the whole world.

Here we are, all of us intent upon getting further into the unknown. We are here to find out what progress parapsychology has made during the past century. Some of us believe in it, others are much more skeptical. All right, go ahead, have it your way. What is important is that we are here to discuss it, and to try to get at the truth and its meaning for all of us.

ANGOFF: Thanks, Mrs. Bolton, for those generous words. I am glad to give the chair now to Dr. Emilio Servadio, a most distinguished parapsychologist known to all of you—known actually to two generations of workers in the field. He has worked closely with the Foundation since its inception twenty years ago. He is a veteran, but a very youthful and a very creative veteran. I’m very glad to present Dr. Emilio Servadio, the chairman for the day.