

FUTURE STUDY AND RESEARCH

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Although academic interest in parapsychology has steadily increased in recent years, resistance still remains noticeable. Emotional roots for such resistance may be found in our culture, which treats psi phenomena largely as "untouchable." We may compare such rejection with exorcism. On the other hand, over-eager acceptance of psi phenomena resembles neurotic regression; incessant concern with parapsychic matters, combined with a pseudo-rationalism, points toward emotional instability.

Anti-parapsychological arguments may be valuable where they point up contradictions, stimulate new research or encourage fresh thought. Whether or not these objections are well-founded, they are not likely to yield to anything but further progress in parapsychology. These objections indicate a road toward wider academic recognition and point the way toward new areas of experimentation and study.

On balance, we may state that psi exists—the experiments of Rhine, Soal and others testify to this. But that leaves the question of what psi is and what can be. True, parapsychology has revealed something new. But what, exactly, is it?

In a program for future research, we must keep in mind that psi is observed as it relates to man; it belongs within a definite psychological, physiological, social and cultural context. So far, we have succeeded in isolating psi through

experiments. Now we must observe it in the living organism. To do this, the following conditions are necessary:

A) We must view psi within its psychological context. It is necessary to study not only the psychological determinism of psi, or of its attendant factors, but also the role of psi in so-called normal functions, such as memory, perception, the learning of languages, or imaginative thought.

B) Psi must be viewed in its physiological context.

C) Psi must be viewed in its cultural context, to determine the degree to which psi occurrences are linked with distinctive cultural conditions.

It is certainly correct to say that no definitive hypothesis of psi has as yet been advanced. Prevailing ideas regarding communication and events may well be inadequate. Also, hypotheses should perhaps correspond to the various categories in which phenomena are found, and which are now arbitrarily grouped under the name of psi.

The following conclusions are offered:

a) Parapsychology has revealed new aspects of certain human experiences and behavior.

b) These new aspects must be considered within the living organism, within their psychological, physiological, and cultural context.

c) Parapsychology thus forces us to pose the general problem of man in relation to his biological and social environment.

d) Thus progress in parapsychology is bound up with research into the most profound mechanisms of psychosomatic man.

e) Two tasks, equally important and necessary, must be fulfilled and are destined to supplement each other reciprocally:

First, the comprehensive investigation, in all their richness and complexity, of the behavior and experiences in which the irreducible core isolated by parapsychology seems to manifest itself.

Second, the elaboration of a hypothesis which, in its most general form (general theory), will stimulate these investigations and which these latter, in turn, will enable us to verify.

The problem raised by parapsychology is that of total man, of his situation in the midst of his fellow human beings, in the world and in society. Neither experimentation in parapsychology, nor the hypothesis which it is high time to formulate, can take as its object an element arbitrarily isolated from a behavior or an experience which this experimentation and this hypothesis are now forced to include.