

MORNING GENERAL DISCUSSION DAY ONE

MORRIS: I have a little bit of additional support for the problems that people are having with the relationship between psi-gamma and psi-kappa and parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous system arousal. It seems to me that it is likely that that relationship would probably be fairly complex, perhaps not as tidy as you have got it. My question for you really is, how important is the tidiness as you have set it out? Suppose it turns out that under some circumstances the relationship goes in the other direction? Sometimes it is difficult to discriminate between psi-gamma and psi-kappa in a particular circumstance. In some cases, such as in the work that I talked about, it appears as though it was the direction of the results rather than psi-gamma versus psi-kappa that is related.

ROLL: Well, of course, the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems are rather complex themselves. They are intertwined and have nerve endings at the same organs, so I would not expect a clear cut distinction between the two. But I would expect some general relationships to obtain. In this case, I would expect strong PK to be related to the sympathetic system and strong ESP dominance by the other system. But sometimes you can not really distinguish between psi-gamma and psi-kappa. Sometimes it is harder than other times. You can not draw any very sharp distinctions. The components of the central nervous system all interact in a very complex way. The interesting thing is that they often only crystallize in anomalous conditions. There you see a profile that reveals an underlying structure of process. For instance, when the connections between the hemispheres are cut, you can recognize their distinct functions. But still, in the intact brain, they are functioning in a holistic manner.

HEARNE: Considering these hierarchical structures you referred to, if I have understood your paper correctly, it is rather deflating to us humans to consider that we could be merely disposable psychic neurons, so to speak, in some much larger and permanent mind structure of the super-consciousness.

ROLL: Your organism would not be there if it were not for the kidneys and the heart and the lungs. There is a very interesting balance

between individuality and universality, between membership in a structure and being subservient to rules from above. Now certainly we know that you are limited in some ways by being a physical organism. But there is a very strong feeling of autonomy, of free will, of being able to do your own thing. Now that is not contradicted by the systems kind of view. When a person has a sense of being free, it is sometimes described as a kind of spiritual freedom, being able to do good, being able to get oneself loose from restrictive instincts, from an existence which is completely circumscribed by one's physical limitations. Experimentally, freedom and autonomy consist in acknowledging higher structures, higher principles. The question is, where do these hierarchies stop, or do they stop anywhere? Assuming an infinite hierarchical arrangement there is an infinite autonomy, infinite freedom and also infinite individuality in a way.

HEARNE: Considering this large sort of super-consciousness, it could theoretically exist somewhere else. It could encompass the whole world, the galaxy or even the universe, presumably. But it is interesting to ponder a possible consequence of such a notion. Let us consider this higher, this super-hierarchy. If it has PK abilities, could it use that PK as an aid to its own larger survival? Specifically, this is just hypothesis, could inhabited planets receive less meteoric bombardment than non-inhabited ones? If you are considering a large consciousness associated with this solar system, it might be in the interest of this entity to misdirect meteoric bombardment. Perhaps that is something that could actually be observed one day. We do need to consider these large scale and other mind-boggling possibilities in order to stretch our concepts of psi. After all, psi has got tremendous and vast potential in universal times. We must not think of it as a bit of telepathy between me and someone over there. It could be a massive universal structure.

ROLL: I very much agree with that perspective. I started off in a very mystical sort of way in parapsychology and things have become more grounded in rather limited perspectives. But then if psi is fairly limited it might be best not to be too idealistic about it. If psi is something that the Russians can use against us and we can use against them or if psi is something that this group of investors can use for their personal interest in the silver market to the detriment of other investors we had better know about it. And so maturity is to be alive to and in these larger structures that extend beyond the psi systems. Science has not yet looked at these more extended systems, but to me they feel different, like the psi system is different from the familiar body and the cell is different from its molecules. I do not think the psi system is a sort of galactic or even planetary system. Indications are that it is

actually fairly limited, but understanding the limitations may enable us to transcend them and to be able to operate on other levels as well.

HEARNE: Again, an analogy with brain: if you look at individual neurons they are just sending a few signals to one another. It is interesting to that locality, but when you add the total system up, then there is something else altogether.

ROLL: That is what we call consciousness. I like Roger Sperry's image very much and I think it is closer to our field than the conceptualization of Penfield and Eccles, with respect to mind/matter interactions. Sperry conceptualized consciousness as emerging from brain structures and processes, but then supervening as a loop such that consciousness directs lower brain functions, directs the flow of electrochemical activity in the brain. Now, that is what I like about it. Where I think it does not work out is if you try to develop an ethical system on the basis of this conceptualization. Sperry is concerned with the individual human brain, individual human consciousness. The kind of ethics based on that is essentially an ethics of rather limited self-interest. That is all right, but it does not have the breadth that he is hoping for. Seeing real connectedness between people does not come out of his conceptualizations. It is too limited. But Sperry's concept of a supervening principle, a principle of consciousness and awareness with freedom of action within limitations can be applied to other biological systems so that we can conceptualize a psi system as having a supervening kind of consciousness, a kind of psi consciousness that we can be part of. This psi consciousness is not all that elevated either. It is not a mystical consciousness, it is a rather limited group consciousness. People feel very good when they are related in that consciousness; it is a very warm feeling, a kind of tribal feeling. But to have a wider reach you have to see these other structures beyond the psi level.

ALVARADO: There is plenty of interesting information in the old physical mediumship literature on arousal states and PK. I am thinking about the publications of old European researchers like Maxwell and Geley. They had the concept of PK as a transformation of bodily energies. However, it seems to me that this brings up a problem of making an interpretation of all these physiological effects that they reported. The question is: does the arousal cause PK or is PK causing the arousal? It depends on what theoretical frame you accept. That would be one problem that I see with interpretation of these effects. Another thing that I would like to ask you is what sort of predictions will you offer to test all these ideas?

ROLL: I would tend to predict that sympathetic arousal is PK conducive. As far as these data are concerned, they may turn out to point

one way or the other, but anyhow that is my feeling. I very much appreciate your offer of sources there and I would like to take advantage of that, thanks.

ALVARADO: In terms of the general model my question is: do you have different predictions to validate the whole idea?

ROLL: Most of the nitty-gritty work relates to the relationship between brain processes and psi functions. With respect to hypotheses coming out of the psi system theory, it is essentially what Debbi mentioned before. They have to do with recency, frequency of contacts and various things like that. So again there are hypotheses that are definitely testable.

PALMER: I like your approach very much, to attempt to try to integrate parapsychology with more orthodox fields. I also can see that this is potentially a way to get around the Cartesian dualism. It is a framework for doing that. The main point I want to make is that I think what you are proposing should be accepted as a paradigm, in a loose sense of that term, and not as a theory or model as such. I think we ought to be very clear in making that distinction. In other words, I think what you are proposing functions primarily as a heuristic, and I think to start trying to treat it as a model or theory and make predictions from it is really premature given the level at which you present it.

ROLL: I think it is a good point, John. I had been doing a lot of other things before I came to this systems theory such as my studies of the evidence for survival of personality after death, of RSPK and of psychometry and haunting. These other ideas and findings seem to fit in well with systems theory and they result in testable hypotheses. I think they are consistent, but I did not arrive at them as the result of the systems theory. On the other hand, the general concepts of, say, homeostasis are found in biological systems theory and lead to predictive hypotheses. And this principle of homeostasis is something I had not thought about myself before I got involved in systems theory.