

## PARAPSYCHOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

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The basic cultural rejection of parapsychology is historical. It was caused by the fact that modern Western culture formed itself around three themes. The first of these was Christianity's struggle against remnants of magical practices and ideologies dating back to pagan thought. The second was the Reformation's effort to suppress magical remnants of Roman Catholicism. The third was the emergence of modern scientific materialism. As a result, when psychical research appeared, Western scientists had, consciously or unconsciously, the impression that earlier magical concepts were seeking to make a come-back.

Moreover, statistics and other methods applied by early researchers tended to alienate scientists; to this day, very serious methodological study is essential to the development of parapsychology.

Anthropology had other cultural prejudices to overcome, notably, resistance toward a proper appreciation of cultural values other than our own. These were linked to a naïve belief in the superiority of European civilization. Such progress as has been possible was achieved in defiance of notions such as so-called primitivism, a state of savagery, and the myth of continuous (and above all uniform) progress.

Relations between anthropology and parapsychology have suffered from the tendency of anthropological field workers, and even more so of armchair anthropologists, to regard parapsychological phenomena unhesitatingly as

fraud, quackery or the manifestation of a so-called primitive mind which was regarded as pre-logical, infantile or pathologic. The reaction of missionaries was mixed.

More recently, however, the role of sorcerers, shamans and medicine-men has been re-evaluated, and such explanations as "collective hallucinations" have given way to more thorough questioning of earlier hypotheses.

Interdisciplinary coordination of parapsychology calls for increased concentration by parapsychologists upon phenomena in non-Western cultures. To accomplish this successfully, batteries of so-called "objective tests" should be avoided as unsuited to a non-Western environment. Means of developing paranormal abilities could be studied through techniques of initiation and by distinguishing between conventional rite, purely theoretical teaching and the practical development of paranormal abilities. Of particular interest could be "indigenous" theories of "psychology" or "physiology" among non-Western populations.

The time has come to pass from psychological and physical parapsychology to anthropological parapsychology. We must move from parapsychology confined within a single culture to a metacultural parapsychology.