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## AFTERNOON GENERAL DISCUSSION

SPINELLI: I would just like to make a comment on Serena's paper concerning the aspect of fear associated with the paranormal. Now, I agree with you that perhaps aside from scientists the vast majority of people, certainly in this country, appear to have accepted the reality of ESP. But my own experience in talking with parents of children I've tested and in going to people's houses where there have been claims of poltergeists is that there has been associated with acceptance a very strong sense of fear as to what these phenomena are. I think if you go back to the mystery cults that Elmar was talking about, the shamanistic experiences and so forth, there is there also an element of fear. People may well accept the reality of what the shaman is saying, but they are also scared or they view the shaman as someone who is to some extent an outsider of their society. Now, perhaps this is related to Elmar's point that psi is a manifestation of the other. And, therefore, the other produces fear in us, in the type of society that we have produced. Serena, do you have any further comments to make about that? My own feeling is that it might not necessarily be instinctual, but I think, from a society point of view, it might be a necessary aspect of psi phenomena.

RONEY-DOUGAL: As you said that I thought of a quote, "Strangeness begets fear, fear begets anger and anger seeks a victim." I think that maybe it is the strangeness of psi when it happens in everyday, ordinary life that frightens people, such as poltergeist phenomena. It's very strange. It's outside of our normal earthbound level of reality. It's akin to the divine in a way. Looking at anthropological sources and shamans, you find that the one who is most psychic often tends to be the mad one, the insane one within the society. That is another source of fear that the two, the abnormal and the paranormal, are very closely linked, as we have heard today in a previous paper by Elmar. The fear is there, it's fear of the unknown, in a way, even though psychic events happen to most of us a lot of the time. It is not part of the logical earthbound level of our reality; it's another aspect of our reality on a different "plane." Perhaps it has also this safeguarding aspect of fear to it. Leslie Price was saying that it is a powerful force. If used negatively it can wreak havoc and so we have a natural fear of something that is so powerful, or potentially so powerful, anyway.

DUPLESSIS: I am not optimistic for the future of parapsychology because now, in France, it is very difficult to talk or write about psi phenomena. There were vigorous attacks against metal bending, for instance. Now it is very difficult to do research in France. But before the war there were very well known scientists such as Professor Charles Richet, Drs. Pierre and Marie Curie, Henri Bergson and others—very well known persons—who thought that they could experiment on these phenomena and who freely discussed them and wrote about them; and I think we, now, go back from this period.

RONEY-DOUGAL: Let us hope that the cycle in France changes yet again, and soon.

CUTTEN: I have a certain amount of sympathy with Sue Blackmore's pessimism about the future, but, on the other hand, just because we have not had the great breakthrough that we've all hoped for, we ought not to be too despondent. Although psychical research has been going on for one hundred years, how long have psychic phenomena been going on? Millions of years. Electricity was known about long before mankind was able to make much use of it. Coming more up-to-day with nuclear energy, the existence of these energies was known, but it's only been in very recent times that we've been able to harness them, to understand them sufficiently to be able to use them. We have not got that far with psychic research in a hundred years, but we do have to remember that one hundred years is relatively an extremely short period of time. If we haven't got the results we're looking for in one hundred years—by repeating and repeating the same kinds of experiments—possibly it is because we haven't changed our ideas and changed our experimental procedures and methodology. Perhaps if we have some new thoughts on the subject I think we ought not to be despondent. We've got plenty of time yet if we relate psychic phenomena to other kinds of phenomena to get some real answers.

SARGENT: To take a specific historical example of electrical phenomena: Peter Dear, who's now working in the Department of Philosophy at Princeton, has written a very good essay comparing the development of parapsychology to the development and study of electrical phenomena. And as a historian of science his argument is that it took seventy-five years after the death of Newton for anybody to come up with a half-way credible kind of account of what was involved in electrical phenomena. Until that time people had theories that you could virtually describe as spiritualistic—etheric fires and all kinds of things. Until Franklin came along there wasn't a half-way convincing explanation of what was going on and no real regularity in the phenomena. There's an extraordinary

quote from Desaguilliers in which you could virtually scrub out electrical phenomena and write in psi phenomena, bemoaning how difficult it is to repeat the experiments now and when different experimenters repeat them they get different results. It's absolutely classic. It's a real, a delightful parallel. He concludes the essay by saying if a Committee for the Scientific Investigations of Claims of Electricity had been around in those days that modern day skeptics would not now have their electric typewriters to bash out their crass comments on. And one could only agree. It is a beautiful historical example. We spent thousands of years rubbing pieces of amber and then we complain because we have only psychics that can't do it on demand. You know, we might have learned something.

SERVADIO: I just would like to give a pair of impressions and I would like to have it pointed out if and where I am wrong. First of all, I have a mixed feeling of admiration and incredulity regarding the optimism of Ms. Roney-Dougal. This reminded me that in the very first years of this century there was a great theatrical performance in my country, in Italy. It was called *Excelsior*. In that performance the future of humanity was described in extremely optimistic terms. We were really approaching the great height of civilization. And after this we had two World Wars, concentration camps and the wonderful world we are living in right now. So I hope that she will be right and that my rather pessimistic outlook will be wrong. The second impression is this. It seems to me that Ms. Roney-Dougal has spoken of developments of things and their categories and phenomena in a rather materialistic way. Anybody can make predictions regarding the material world, the technological world. I can say that in the future there will be much better microphones than these, because a microphone is a technical reality. We know how it works. But, when I hear that in the future precognition will be used for practical purposes in business or in politics, it seems to me that the start is rather uncertain. Because we cannot just say what precognition really is, we cannot control precognition. I mean we just cannot say I will be precognitive as I can say I will speak into a microphone or put on or off a light. So this kind of approach seems not to cope with the idea that many of us have about psi phenomena. Well, we know that in the one past century of work we cannot just rule and control psi phenomena as we can control, switch off or on a light in a room.

RONEY-DOUGAL: Yes, it is true as you say that I stuck to the material side of the future and I did that on purpose because I see that we have initially to head for the practical applications within the sphere of parapsychology. And I was merely trying to look at all the possible practical uses that one can take psi into. I am fully aware of the spiritual and the

non-materialistic aspects of psi and I think that is a completely different paper. The Gestalt of this paper, however, is spiritual, in that the ideal for the new order being outlined is that of the New Jerusalem where we live in harmony with nature. I touched on this aspect most clearly when mentioning sites of special psi power being used as places of government.

BIERMAN: Since we have come to discussing the strengths or weaknesses of psi and the development of psi's strength in the future or the way it can be used, I should like to recall to your attention the model I developed this morning for the purpose of psi. That is that psi is meant to give direction to our evolution, essentially by collective retroactive PK. In that way it should be a weak mechanism to avoid oscillations in the evolutionary process. I consider psi centered around individuals as an anomaly of psi itself. This constraint in goal and strength of the psi process should reduce the fear that a world with abuse of psi can occur. I think the psi centered around individuals will stay as unreliable as it is now or maybe get a little bit better. I don't share at all the comparison with electricity. I think it's also a shame we all try to prove psi is something quite new and quite different from everything before and then we are going to compare it to electricity! I don't see that comparison at all. We have a quite new "mechanism" in our hands and it might very well stay weak and unstable because that might be one of its intrinsic properties.

RONEY-DOUGAL: No, psi is not a new mechanism. Psi has been used throughout the ages by people as far back as you go in history.

BIERMAN: I don't mean it in the sense that it just started.

BELOFF: I'm getting up to take issue with something that Carl Sargent said; partly because he has such a way of saying things with an air of confidence and I am worried that some of you may be taken in by it. Basically, I agree entirely with Susan Blackmore that psi is weak and evasive and like her I unfortunately see little prospect of things changing in the foreseeable future. And to try and contradict this, Carl Sargent mentioned two things, neither of which really have much relevance. One was to Thurston's cases of levitation. Now, I don't think that the reason why this is irrelevant is because it's historical evidence. I agree with Sargent that a lot of historical evidence is well worth our studying carefully and taking seriously. The reason is that even Thurston doesn't claim that more than perhaps a half-dozen people he could mention, ever even claimed to levitate, let alone produced strong evidence of having done so, perhaps St. Theresa, Joseph of Coppertino, there are a few you can count on your fingers. It still remains a very rare phenomenon and I don't know if any individual at the present time claims

auto-levitation. I mean we've been told of instances this afternoon, but it's obviously not a case that can be repeated or submitted for examination or, so far as I know, even witnessed. So levitation remains way beyond our dreams. The other case he mentioned which was much closer home as far as experimental parapsychology is concerned, is Ryzl's experiments with Stepanek where by dint of constant repetition he managed to get a five or a three digit number completely correct by going through various guessing procedures with his subject. The point is that other people have since repeated this, have attempted this repetitive guessing technique for transmitting communication. I remember how excited Douglas Dean used to get about Ryzl's work. Well, since then, again zero. I heard at a PA convention about a year or so ago, that Carpenter or one of those younger parapsychologists in America tried his technique and just couldn't get a reliable result from it. So again it is a query.

SARGENT: That is not correct. Carpenter reported an 80 percent plus hit rate in a binary task with an associated  $Z$  of over 5. He had very highly significant results indeed. I was going to quote him. . . .

BELOFF: Then my memory is at fault. But I seem to remember he didn't get the complete digit transmission that he was . . .

SARGENT: . . . he got a detection rate in excess of 80 percent. Very highly significant.

BELOFF: He did? Well I'm very glad to hear this, I'm all for positive results. I mean let's see some more of this, that's all I can say. And perhaps next time we'll really get there. Finally, about the analogy with electricity, I think it is a false analogy, because although admittedly it took a long time for humanity to get around to an explanation of electrical phenomena, at least with rubbing pieces of amber together you had a repeatable phenomenon—namely the phenomenon of electrostatic attraction. And we don't have such a repeatable phenomenon that we can say now try to explain this. We can't do something simple like that and say explain this, because it wouldn't work when we tried to do it.

VON LUGADOU: I think that a main reason for the crisis of our technology and for the crisis in our belief in technology is that scientists have promised too much and could not fulfill those promises and we should not do the same on our own in parapsychology. This is the first point I want to stress. The other is that I have somewhat disparate or paradoxical reactions to your approach to the future of psi. You say that we need new methods and all we have done in all the hundred years of the SPR seems to have no value. But I think that all research which was done in parapsychology used methods of classical science. We have not taken into account that normal science has made a lot of new approaches.

In normal physics, for instance, in the work that I. Prigogine and others are doing, we are at the beginning of a new revolution. We should notice this and see if we can apply such methods to our field. I think we would learn a lot of things from this, but we should not be too pessimistic, nor should we be too optimistic, because otherwise we would be surprised and we would regret this.

RONEY-DOUGAL: While talking about these practical applications I most certainly was not putting down the last one hundred years. As I seem to remember a comment I made before—science is very important in that it helps to bring the “magic” of psi down to earth. Science is our language and it’s the way we’re working at the moment. I fully agree with what you were saying. The revolution that is happening within the rest of science, especially in physics, is most hopeful.

SARGENT: The case of Bill Delmore, I suppose, was an example of a very powerful performance. There are good and well established cases. Another example could be Girard’s metal bending beyond the strength of normal human physical capacity. There are examples of strong effects to be found. It doesn’t matter if they’re unusual, the argument is one concerning potential. And if you can produce powerful effects even in a small number of cases then the argument that psi effects are weak collapses, because this is a universal assertion. As long as you can produce just a few examples of strong performance, it shows that the potential is there. And I think that’s really all you need to propose the kind of argument that Serena did. We can’t really be hard on this kind of argument because of the nature of the paper. It’s a speculative paper. But if there are a few examples of powerful effects then it seems to me perfectly valid to propose the kind of arguments that she is proposing. Well, sure we can sit and go through this with left hemisphere thinking and rip this up and that up, but that is pointless. It’s not taking the paper in the spirit in which it’s intended. It is trying to do something other with the paper than the object for which it was prepared and that was to stimulate thought about what we are trying to do and why we are trying to do it. To kind of push people’s noses back down on the ground, misses the object of the exercise I think.

BELOFF: Just to get it straight about Delmore, he was averaging 3 guesses correct out of 52 as opposed to a chance expectancy of 1 correct out of 52. Is that supposed to be a strong psi effect? This is what I want to know.

SARGENT: Delmore hit 80 percent on confidence calls.

COX: I want to make a comment about Serena Roney-Dougal’s paper. I, too, have long championed the testing of sensitives when you find them in other than their own desired way. I’ve tested a dozen static PK

sensitives with cards and dice and found interesting parallels worthy of publication. The paper I wrote about them is in the manuscript file at the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man.

I don't myself think that psi can be trained, as I believe you implied, but we can discover novel ways of making it increase, of increasing our ability to get yield from the given amount of psi that we might have. There is a device, for example, that I constructed some years ago at the FRNM. It's still in operation but a computer breakdown slowed it up a year or two. At any rate, it's now operating, and is for the purpose of pooling both ESP and PK. The method is structured to render a continuous PK input to the computer, but on a stream of blind targets (consisting of tumbling cubes and balls) which require goal-oriented ESP to ascertain. James Carpenter did highly significant work through repetitious ESP proceedings. Brier and Tyminski also have tried that and so have others laboriously. It takes time, but now I believe we have a technique of doing it semi-automatically.

SERVADIO: I have some information that perhaps may be useful to Ms. Roney-Dougal. In her paper she mentions "curative telepathists, commonly known as psychotherapists these days, although no training program that I know of teaches telepathy to potential psychotherapists or psychiatrists." Now this is being done in Mexico City by Dr. Jaime Cardeña del Río, who is a leading psychoanalyst. He is the President of the Circulo Mexicano de Psilogia Profunda. He has studied the possibilities of ESP between analyst and patient as many psychoanalysts, including myself, have done for many years. But he has observed that, in general, the analyst keeps aloof from the patient and just studies what happens to the patient, involving himself only to a very limited extent. His idea is that the analyst or psychotherapist could possibly develop in himself something more open to psi phenomena, in addition to being more attuned to what happens to the patient. This is done by Jaime Cardeña del Río, in Mexico City.