

THE PSYCHIC AREA AS THE MISSING LINK BETWEEN
THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE IN MODERN
WESTERN CIVILIZATION

JOHN ROSSNER

Before I begin I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parapsychology Foundation for the vision to call a conference on parapsychology, religion and philosophical concepts. I think that is a very important contribution not only to parapsychology and its future, but also to academic studies in religion.

My paper will be concerned with the integration of parapsychological insights into comparative studies in religion and culture, and specifically with the study of the role of psi experience in the development of the Western religious tradition.

The Relevance of Parapsychology to the History of Religions

1. *Disclosure of Immortality in the Lives of the Founders of Religions Through Psychic and Mystical Experiences.* Various psychic and mystical experiences, suggestive of human immortality in a multidimensional universe, have been claimed throughout history. They are found in the sacred literature of the East and the West, both in ancient and modern times. They are virtually inseparable from many of mankind's most profound and historically significant religious and cultural commitments. Countless anecdotal tales of the wondrous psychic and spiritual powers and feats—witnessed in the lives of the shaman, the saint, the holy man or woman, the guru, the master, the god-man, the prophet, the adept, the magus or seer—run like a common thread of theurgic fiber throughout most of the great religious and cultural traditions of the world.

These include marvelous accounts testifying to special disclosure-situations in the lives of the founders of religions:

- . Visions and soul-trips into heaven-worlds, higher spheres, astral planes and other dimensions of (what is perceived as) an essentially multidimensional universe of spirit and space;

- Visitations to the earth plane of various higher beings, gods, angels, devas, as messengers of Divine revelation, whether in physical, parapsychical or spiritual form;
- Resurrections and various forms of post-mortem appearances of ascended masters, saints and spirits encountering the living, offering guidance, healing, encouragement or assistance in the fulfillment of a Divine mission;
- Ascensions or translations into higher spiritual worlds of special holy persons or agents of a Divine Plan;
- Mystical experiences of the Divine Light, theophanies of Divine Presence often accompanied by an Illumination, A Descent of Divine Wisdom, or Higher Understanding;
- A soul-empowerment by contact with the Highest Reality, or an endowment by Divine Spirit, with a new (Cosmic) Consciousness in order to carry the message of a New Order and a New Being to the human race.

Intimations suggestive of Immortality, of "other worlds," of a "higher life," here or hereafter, and of the various kinds of psycho-spiritual transformations that we might have to go through to attain them, have come to human beings in history through the primary vehicle of living, personal, psychic and mystical experiences. These kinds of psychic or mystical experiences, whether they occur in Egypt, Greece, Persia or India, or modern America, generally give birth in those who have them to a belief in Immortality. This conviction on the part of charismatic founders of spiritual movements subsequently gets translated into various codified and institutionalized religious doctrines and philosophical conceptions of immortality and an afterlife.

2. *Out-of-the-Body Experiences as the Basis for Plato's Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul.* E. R. Dodds, formerly a Professor of Classics at Oxford, and at one time a President of the British Society for Psychical Research, observed that even Plato's well known doctrine of the "separable-Self," or the "immortality of the soul," was not an idea which he simply thought up as a philosophical abstraction, but rather it was something he had learned through personal psychic and spiritual experiences with the shamans of northwest Greece and/or with the Pythagoreans, who practiced a form of induction of "astral projection," or what would today be called "out-of-the-body experience."¹ This is a form of a psychic and spiritual experience which leaves those individuals who have it convinced that they have somehow left the physical body in a duplicate "energy body," or "body-of-light" and traveled about, either on the earth plane, or in other higher "dimensions of reality" and returned to ordinary physical consciousness.

3. *The Near-Death Experience as a Basis for Belief in Immortality Today.* We know today from studies of the "Near-Death Experience," which have been pioneered by Elisabeth Kübler Ross, Raymond Moody, Michael Sabom, Kenneth Ring and others, that these kinds of experiences generally leave those who have had them convinced of the reality of human immortality and the conscious survival of the individual personality after death. Such experiences would seem to remain constant across religious and cultural traditions and on many occasions appear to happen contrary to the previous belief-systems and expectations of the individuals who have had them.²

4. *Major Types of Mysticism Suggestive of Immortality, Some of Which Include Psychic Experience.* The late Dr. Shoneberg Setzer, of the Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, has pointed out that it is erroneous to assume, as both Christian or Jewish theologians and many Hindu, Buddhist and other Eastern religious thinkers in the modern period have done, that true mystical or spiritual experience has nothing to do with psychic phenomena. Setzer lists five basic typologies of mystical experience which have been accepted by the founders of many of the world's religious traditions as authentically related to, or phenomenologically identical with, either their own or other's spiritual awakening to and growth in, a Transcendent and Immortal Reality upholding all Existence.³ These are:

Pure Consciousness Mysticism. The experience of a pure, formless "Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss", as in Samadhic or Nirvanic experiences, or in the formless "ecstasy of the Spirit" described by Jewish, Christian and Islamic mystics. (Unfortunately this is the only type of mysticism understood by many modern religious thinkers).

Archetypal Mysticism. The great symbolic, archetypal visions, apparitions, and dreams, of figures like Ezekiel, St. John on Patmos in the Book of Revelations, or the great myths of Hinduism and Buddhism. (These experiences are certainly not "formless", but they do convey mystical experiences of awakening, ineffable majesty, and can also lead to spiritual transformations.)

Spiritistic Mysticism. Mystic encounter with spirit entities, believed to be real and not merely symbolic. This includes the Biblical angels, Indian devas, Islamic jin, spirits of deceased Catholic saints, the ancestors in shamanistic cultures, spirit-guides in Modern Spiritualist Groups, and Ascended-Masters in mystical or esoteric traditions of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, etc. (In all of these cases a sense of the Divine Presence is mediated to the human subject through the ministry of such spiritual entities, who are believed to share in Divinity or Immortal qualities, to varying degrees, in a celestial existence).

Clairvoyant Mysticism. Psychic-mystical experiences, in general, including prophetic visions, apparitions, out-of-the-body experiences, distant-viewing, retrocognitive experiences, near-death experiences, healing miracles, etc., which lead one to a dramatic realization of the transcendent power of mind and spirit, and to a higher order of consciousness and—ultimately—to a Reality beyond that seen by physical senses or calculable by logic alone.

Nature Mysticism. Experiences in which contemplation of the natural beauty and wonder of the physical world, or stars, leads poets, artists, or scientists to an inner sense of awe, harmony, and peace, and thence to the conviction that there is an ultimate order of causal Reality behind the phenomenal universe which mankind may discover in peak-experiences of exalted consciousness.

5. *The Argument That All Forms of Mystical Experience are Merely Culturally Conditioned Forms of Behavior is Erroneous.* There still are, unfortunately, many secular scholars studying religion today, themselves strangers to psi phenomena, who would say that all mystical experience is merely culturally-conditioned behavior. Some think that it is simply due to expectations and perspectives that are unconsciously conditioned into an individual, who then produces, as delusions or projections, his or her own mystical experiences. Such scholars often would argue that mystical experiences or psi phenomena cannot possibly be the points of origin for valid religious beliefs that mold civilizations.

But, if that is so, we would have to ask, why do people in India who are raised as Hindus, people in New York who are raised as Catholics, Protestants, Jews or Agnostics, people in the Middle East who are Moslems, people in Southeast Asia who are Buddhists, etc., all experience basically the same phenomenology of mystical and psychical phenomena without ever having read any of the literature on such things as "near-death experience," "out-of-the-body experience," or mediumship and the like? And how are some persons able to "bring back" information from real places on this planet to which they have not been, solely as a result of inner-psi experiences, such as "out-of-the-body experiences," "distant viewing," or "traveling clairvoyance"? How do healers, in widely separated cultures, all report essentially the same phenomena of healings?

6. *Historical Evidence for the Psychospiritual Roots of Human Belief in Immortality.* There is ample evidence, for those familiar with spontaneous psychic and spiritistic experiences today, that claims to extraordinary or "paranormal" psychic and spirit phenomena, encountered in various forms of mystical-cum-psychic "disclosure-situations," have

in fact formed the basis for those human belief-systems which have postulated mankind's noblest ideas of Transcendence and Immortality. Varieties of such mystical-cum-psychic disclosure-situations are found in the religious literature of the East and the West in both ancient and modern times. Of course, it is usually not even suspected by those scholars who are unfamiliar with psychic and spirit phenomena that such experiences could explain the origins of human beliefs in life-after-death or of traditional conceptions of after-death states.

Nevertheless, the historian of religions, Mircea Eliade, of the University of Chicago, has taken note of the continuity and persistence of claims to all forms of the paranormal in human religious experience from ancient to modern times.⁴ He has stated that there is no more important an issue confronting his discipline today than the question of the "reality" of such phenomena. He has cited the Italian ethnologist Ernesto de Martino to suggest that there may be indeed a factual parapsychological or psi component to be discovered in such claims, which might now be investigated by those qualified to do so.⁵

Another religion scholar, Huston Smith, has more recently mapped the central place which belief in the psychic dimension has played in the ancient Oriental cosmologies which underlie most classical religious conceptions of the sacred.⁶ I myself am probably the first academic involved in a university department of religious studies in North America or Europe today to have attempted to reconstruct the role that primary psychic and spiritistic experiences appear to have played in the development of the Western religious tradition.⁷

7. *Academic Problems in Dealing with Psychic Forms of Mystical Experience and Conceptions of Immortality.* Most contemporary academics who are involved in religious studies, theology, philosophy, anthropology, psychology and/or other social sciences and humanities, have not yet attempted to deal seriously with the general paranormal element in human religious experience from the vantage point which is available to them from consciousness studies and psychical research. This is certainly unfortunate.

From a phenomenological point of view, the common thread of theurgic, mystical and shamanistic fiber is woven so tightly into the fabric of all of our human spiritual traditions all over the globe, that it is virtually impossible to realistically separate so-called mythic materials from their possible real psychic content, or from later interpretive philosophical or theological traditions concerning such issues. Transcendence, immortality, or meaningful experiences suggestive of a life-after-death, or of credible maps of an afterlife, are often lost in a con-

fusing welter of mythological, philosophical and theological interpretive traditions.

The imagery of such shamanistic or spiritistic, "real magic" or psychic and archetypical mystical experiences, like the imagery of both the myths of religion and of our dreams, is so bizarre by modern secular standards that it is difficult, if not impossible, for many people today, conditioned by contemporary rationalistic, reductionistic, and materialistic a priori investigative methods (including scholars and theologians) to relate to them.

The result is that, up to this point in the modern West, at least since the Age of Reason and Enlightenment, we have found ourselves astride a tremendous, ever-widening gulf between our religious and our scientific traditions concerning the basic issues of life, death and the possibilities of an afterlife. Such possibilities of an afterlife are often embarrassing to our sciences, including our medical sciences, our social sciences and even our modern philosophies, because we do not have the imaginative paradigms or psi-cognizant methodologies required either to deal with such issues or with the study of human psychic and mystical experiences in general.

Modern scholars are most uncomfortable at dealing with precisely these kinds of experiences, while our main spiritual traditions have often, originally at least, been founded upon the basis of them. Our most ancient sacred traditions have consistently formulated human hopes for Transcendence and Immortality by employing language whose psychic and/or spiritistic experiential referents are simply unknown to most academics today, including historians of religion and theologians alike.

Problems that Established Forms of Science and Religion have had with Parapsychology

1. *Customary a priori Assumptions in the Modern Scientific Paradigm Since the Age of Reason and Enlightenment.* I do not need to remind you of the kind of assumptions that, at its most reductionistic moments, the modern scientific paradigm has, since the Age of Reason and Enlightenment until the recent advent of the new physics and various new psychologies, often been thought to contain. Willis W. Harmon, of Stanford University, in his *Incomplete Guide to the Future*, has listed ten of these common postulates of the modern scientific paradigm.⁸ I need only paraphrase five of them in order to make my point. These are common beliefs that are often assumed as the basis for the world-

view that we use, or have used, during the past two or three centuries when studying the "natural world":

Consciousness is nothing more than a by-product of physical and biochemical processes going on in the brain. Not all scientists have said that, but a basic assumption is often that if something is not physically-based, it is not real.

Man can acquire knowledge only through his physical senses, or perhaps through a kind of memory storage in the genes.

The concept of a free inner-person is a pre-scientific explanation for behavior which is really determined by external environmental forces and internal organic reactions.

Mental activity, as mere fluctuations in the brain, internal to the physical organism, cannot possibly affect the properties of matter in the external environment, or directly influence the outcome of events. (By contrast, religious people usually believe that real changes can be brought about through hopes, attitudes and prayers, for example.)

The individual cannot conceivably survive the bodily death of the biological organism, since the latter is the basis for all formal identity, consciousness and thought activity.

Since the 19th Century it has not only been the more narrowly defined frontier discipline of "parapsychology" which has been slighted and denigrated by those scientists and philosophers biased by these particular a priori assumptions. It has also been very difficult to obtain a fair and balanced study of the whole gamut of human spiritual, mystical and intuitive experiences within mankind's religious history. In spite of their strategic importance for the history of religions, until very recently we have had no serious, multi-disciplinary examinations of these kinds of human psychospiritual experiences which would attempt to shed light upon any possible, veridical psi components in them, or upon their often important ethical and sociopolitical effects.

Willis Harmon observes: "Research into consciousness and psychic phenomena is such a bitterly contested battleground because the data in these areas challenges all of the above premises. Yet it was on the basis of these above premises that the increasingly prestigious, scientific world-view has been able in the past to dismiss as of secondary consequence, the entire religious, aesthetic, and intuitive experiences of mankind and hence to discredit the value systems based upon these subjective experiences."⁹

2. *Modern Heresies in Religion and Science which would Oppose the Recovery of Insights from Psychical and Spiritual Experiences Today:* (1) "Dispensationalism," (2) "Institutionalism," (3) "Demythologism," and (4)

"*Scientism.*" Just as many modern scientists have had difficulties with the acceptance of the reality, validity and relevance of psi phenomena, due to the prevalent, a priori assumptions of secular rationalism and reductionism, so have many modern theologians, affected by fundamentalist, institutionalist, or liberal a priori viewpoints, had difficulties of their own, stemming from many years of hardened attitudes.

From the standpoint of the phenomenology of religion, a persistent habit of Jewish and Christian polemicists, whether in the Rabbinic or Patristic traditions, has been to try to isolate Moses and the Israelite prophets, or Jesus, from the universal psychospiritual experience of mankind that I have referred to as the "Primordial Tradition." In their zeal to show the superiority and uniqueness of Biblical figures, they have often resorted to condemnation of all holy men, prophets, magicians, god-men, etc., of other traditions as either frauds or diabolical imitations. Such a biased ethnocentricity fails to grasp the simple fact that universal spiritual, metaphysical and psychic laws might exist, and that "holiness" and "Divinity", if they are real at all, must belong to the whole human evolutionary process.

The Biblical tradition itself incorporates the entire gamut of arcane psychic and spiritistic experience of the ancient world. Both the canonical Old Testament and New Testament are full of so-called "supernatural" events, which in today's language would be called "psychic phenomena", from the officially sanctioned oracles of the Temple at Jerusalem (using the Urim and Thummim), and the utterances of canonical prophets (like Samuel and Nathan who give psychic readings and precognitive warnings), to those multiple claims of encounters with angelic beings (on the part of Abraham, Moses, Peter et al.) or deceased prophets and saints (i.e., the encounter between Elijah, Moses and Jesus at the "Transfiguration") and the stories of miraculous healings (Elisha, Jesus, etc.), the resuscitations from the dead, and various "nature miracles," such as levitation, walking on water and materialization (manna) and the teleportation of objects. And yet modern theologians have for the most part consistently rejected any systematic attempt to pursue modern psychical research, in which such phenomena may be studied.

"Psychic" experience is often feared by many traditional clergy and laity, along with the contemporary revival of interest in "occult" ideas and the "new religions" stemming from Eastern and/or Western esoteric religion and philosophy. The roots of this fear may be traced to certain unfortunate philosophical and theological assumptions of long-standing in the Judeo-Christian tradition which must be squarely faced today before any progress can be made toward understanding the op-

eration of universal, natural human psychic and spiritual faculties and their role in the development of the world's religious traditions.

Traditional Jewish and Christian scholarship has for centuries used the so-called Deuteronomic prohibitions of psychic and spirit phenomena to condemn all forms of psi which occur outside of a specifically Jewish or Christian cultic context. However, recent scholarship has shown that divination and psychic readings were performed by the Israelite prophets themselves and by the official priesthood at Jerusalem. What was condemned by the Deuteronomic redactors seems to have been the divination and spirit phenomena of Canaanite seers in the name of other gods. Furthermore, the form of communication-with-the-dead which seems to be condemned in Deuteronomy would appear to bear no relationship with the benign mediumistic experience of the modern Spiritualist tradition. It was, rather, a form of black-magic in which the corpse of a person was used in necromantic rites in an attempt to summon the soul of the deceased and compel it to serve the needs of the sorcerer.¹⁰ No form of higher religion, ancient or modern, would sanction this lower form of psychism.

In the canonical New Testament we find evidence that Jesus himself sanctioned and performed something resembling a materialization and transfiguration seance by speaking with the deceased prophets Moses and Elijah on Mount Tabor in the presence of Peter, James and John.¹¹ St. Paul enumerates the psychic gifts of the Spirit as including prophecy, miracle working and healing.¹² Prophecy in the early Christian community clearly included what we would today call clairvoyance, clair-audience, precognition, distant-viewing; and miracle working included psychokinetic phenomena of various types as signs of the Divine presence in the works of apostles and other Christian missionaries. Among the Pre-Nicean Fathers Ignatius of Antioch writes: "Some in the churches most certainly have knowledge of things to come (prophecy). Some have visions, some give clairaudient messages and heal the sick by laying-on-of-hands, and others speak in tongues."

St. Paul had admonished his contemporaries ". . . not to forbid those called prophets to speak in the churches, else we be found to be muzzling the Holy Spirit." In the early Second Century A.D. the canon laws of Hippolytus in Rome repeat this admonition of St. Paul to be sure to allow the prophets (who had visions, clairvoyant, clairaudient and precognitive experiences) to speak in the churches. Other Patristic writers, including Tatian, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius and others, mention such psi experiences as commonplace in the Christian communities of the Empire prior to Constantine.

But after the Church had become the "religious affairs department and salvation-machine" of the Roman State, "live" psychic and spirit communications, in the form of visions, apparitions and gnostic dialogues with the ascended Savior and other saints, were gradually prohibited in the interests of religious uniformity and conformity to state-sanctioned episcopal control in dissemination of the now canonically approved version of the New Testament scriptures. In the Fourth Century St. Jerome, who had just translated the Koine Greek version of the canonical New Testament books into the Latin Vulgate, forwarded his translations to Pope Damasus in Rome with the advice that it would not be wise to ". . . permit those called prophets to speak openly in the churches as they please, lest they be found to contradict in some points the doctrines contained in these books."¹⁴

That advice was taken and institutional Christianity thereafter, in spite of St. Paul and the Canons of Hippolytus, was generally to condemn rather than encourage psychic and spiritual demonstrations by Christians, as well as by pagans, and unorthodox heretics, such as the various Gnostic Christians were now to become. Bishops and emperors, such as St. Ambrose of Milan and the Emperor Theodosius, were to join forces to issue edicts against churches employing persons who used spiritual gifts. This prohibition went so far as the active persecution and slaying of both pagans and Christians deemed to be heretical for engaging in psi practices. The Montanist heresy was wiped out by means of this method.

Throughout Christian history since then, a fair and reasonable approach to the study and/or practice and development of one's natural psychic and spiritual gifts, in the most orthodox Christian religious contexts, was to be blocked. It is no accident that the first persons in the 18th and 19th Centuries to become interested in psychic and spirit phenomena were often secularized free-thinkers.

The custodians of the church of Jesus had attempted to "seal the doors between heaven and earth," and now the God of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Peter and Paul would have to use Swedenborgians, Shakers, Mesmerists and Spiritualists of various types to force it open as a counterpoise to the rationalist, materialistic reductionism of the emerging 19th Century secular Humanist religion of "Scientism." It was at this juncture that the founders of the various societies for psychical research entered the scene in an attempt to suggest a missing link or mid-ground between fundamentalist and institutionalist versions of religion, on the one hand, and equally dogmatic or fundamentalist and institutionalistic versions of science, on the other.

The Modern Fundamentalistic Heresies of "Dispensationalism" and "Institutionalism," and the Liberal Heresy of "Demythologism" as the Main Obstacles in the Recovery of the Roots of the Judeo-Christian Tradition through the Parapsychology of Religion

Three of the most widespread positions today which act as obstacles to understanding the role which parapsychology could play in the recovery of the shamanistic and theurgical roots of the Judeo-Christian Tradition in Hellenistic Judaism, the New Testament and Primitive Church are "Dispensationalism," "Institutionalism" and "Demythologism."

"Dispensationalism" is a particularly Fundamentalist conception used in the 16th Century by Calvin, Luther and other reformers. They assumed, in their fight against the concepts of an ongoing authoritative Catholic Tradition, that the "miracles" of the Old Testament prophets and Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament, were once-and-for-all unique occurrences, or special "dispensations" which stopped with the writing of the last book of the New Testament. Something akin to "Dispensationalism" also seems to be popular among certain orthodox Jewish rabbis, who teach the same concept, but would end "miracles" somewhat earlier, i.e., with the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi c. 400 B.C.

A "rabbinic council" convened at Jamnia in Asia Minor during the last decade of the First Century A.D. declared the process of Divine revelation through the prophets to have terminated with Malachi, in the Fourth Century B.C. This was probably done in response to the attempts of Jesus' disciples to ground their claims for his Divinity in such "Scripture" as the Apocryphal books of Enoch and Daniel, in which the "Son of Man" is portrayed as a God-Man, and the mysterious Archetype of the Divinely restored human nature. History was to repeat itself when the Church Fathers were to "close" the canon on New Testament "Scriptures" within three centuries after Jamnia, or less.

In modern Jewish and Christian forms of "Dispensationalism" there are several underlying modern assumptions that were unknown in the ancient world, either to the patriarchs, prophets, or to Jesus and his original disciples. These assumptions are:

(1) that "miracles" are contrary to a "natural law" which is fixed and immutable for all men, but that God had "dispensed" the chosen "people of God" and Jesus and His apostles, from these "natural laws" in order to put His stamp of Divine approval on their teachings and deeds in front of selected witnesses. Such an idea of "natural law,"

limited as it is to materialistic and rationalistic criteria, could, in fact, not have existed in its present form among Jews or Christians until after the Humanist Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Therefore, I have called this a "modern heresy."

(2) that there are no such things as "natural psychic" or "natural spiritual" powers for ordinary persons and

(3) that wherever "paranormal" phenomena of any kind occur, outside of the Bible, we can immediately assume that "Satan," the "Devil," or other "supernatural forces" inimical to God are operating.

The fact is, however, as any competent historical review will illustrate, that (a) extraordinary natural psychic and spiritual phenomena have occurred throughout history among all peoples, in all religions and cultures and (b) these phenomena are, per se, neither good nor bad, unless and until they are used by men (or angels) for Divine purposes, in the fulfillment of God's will, or conversely, for negative purposes.

The second heresy, which has become widespread among many Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant churchmen who are often not Fundamentalists, is "Institutionalism." This conception is often used by churchmen who do accept that "miracles" occur or have occurred since the time of the New Testament and the Primitive Church. But, in order to avoid accepting the idea that God, or "nature," would initiate such "miracles" among people "outside of the Church," "Institutionalists" have invented the idea that "true miracles," or "God-given" ones are only allowed by God in order to "seal," reinforce, or instill belief in the "teachings of the Church." This usually means some form of so-called "Catholic" or "orthodox" dogma or doctrine in its commonly accepted form.

The heresy of "Institutionalism" assumes that God is a "respector of persons," as it were, who bends otherwise inflexible "natural laws" for the "sake of the faithful" only. "Institutionalism," like "Dispensationalism," thus also assumes that "natural" psychic faculties do not exist, or that if they do they have nothing to do with "Revelation" which is an exclusively "orthodox" affair.

"Institutionalists" will therefore, sometimes concede that parapsychology might be a "secular science," but that it has "nothing to do with religion." For in "true religion," which is some form of "orthodox" institutional Christianity only, God "reveals" Himself through selected, rare, "praeternatural occurrences" for specific, (later-to-be) canonically approved purposes.

"Demythologism" is the third and perhaps most formidable obstacle standing in the way of an appreciation of the possible functions of the

parapsychology of religion today among mainline churchmen in so-called liberal theological traditions. "Demythologization" is quite legitimate and necessary as a method for dealing with those portions of scripture or tradition which were either (a) not written in the first place to be taken literally, or (b) written to be taken literally, but also to contain a Transcendent meaning, a Divine truth, wrapped, as it were, in an historical event. But the modern heresy of "Demythologism" is something rather distinct from this legitimate use of demythologization. It is the use of demythologization techniques where they are inappropriate, i.e., in the removal of contemporary belief in the "real miracles" of natural, universally possible psychic and spirit phenomena, that rationalistic and materialistic scholars neither understand nor accept. The heresy of "Demythologism" is peculiar to some modern liberal theologians who have accepted, either consciously or unconsciously, the whole secular, Enlightenment world-view in which "miracles," especially "nature miracles" like those in the Bible, simply do *not* occur whether in ancient or modern times.

Such theologians think that they are performing a valuable task by "rescuing" the kernel of philosophical or ethical truth from the Gospels by making it possible to reject the veridical content of such things as dreams, visions, apparitions of angels or saints or spirits, miraculous healings, resurrections and reappearances of the dead to the living, supernatural powers of mind or of spirit over matter, etc., from the Biblical and ecclesiastical traditions.

Unfortunately, such rejections leave little hope for the Christian, who is then sealed in by the fixed, mechanistic universe of "modern science" once again. The omnipotence of God and His sovereignty within nature is forfeited. We are left with a new heretical form of Christianity which has nothing much to do either with the Bible, the "Primordial Tradition," or those recent insights from the frontiers of scientific research in human consciousness, parapsychology, or parapsysics which I have reviewed in Books One and Two of Volume I of *Toward Recovery of the Primordial Tradition*.

Obviously, none of these three heresies, "Dispensationalism," "Institutionalism," or "Demythologism," have much to do with the original form of Orthodox-Catholic Christian Paradosis, which rested upon a Primordial Tradition of natural intuition and insight in the ancient world. "Revelation" was, in this ancient perspective, not to be contrasted with "Nature," or "natural vehicles" of human perception and communication, whether psychic or physical. *All* of the channels of human communication, i.e., ordinary sense perception *or* ESP and PK,

could be used by God, angels, spirits, or men to reveal themselves to one another in a living, psychodynamic universe.

In fairness, it must be observed that (a) not all Fundamentalists today are "Dispensationalists" in the pejorative sense described here, (b) not all ecclesiastically-concerned Catholic or Protestant churchmen are "Institutionalists," and (c), not all liberal Christians are guilty of what I have called the heresy of "Demythologism." I have merely made the point that these three distorted positions are widespread today, and they do prevent the admission of the relevance of psychic faculties and psi phenomena to religion in some theological quarters.

The Secular Humanist Heresy of "Scientism," or the Idolization of 18th and 19th Century Scientific Philosophical Assumptions concerning Fixity of Physical Nature as Absolutes, and Various Self-Appointed Committees of Academics and Magicians for Debunking Paranormal Phenomena

There is an equally widespread heresy of rationalistic, materialistic "scientism" in some contemporary secular scientific circles which would work to prevent the admission of the relevance of psychic faculties and psi phenomena to science. Like the three negative religious positions cited above, it rests on arbitrary a priori, philosophical assumptions, combined with deep-set prejudices and an insensitive debunking methodology.

This has frequently manifested in the past few years in the public stance of the aggressive "professional skeptic" who, in the name of "science," suddenly appears on the scene to denounce and/or defame whenever a legitimate professional psychical researcher or parapsychologist is given any publicity or recognition for significant findings. The characteristic method is usually the same: first flatly deny the data, then punch holes in the methodology of the experiment with out-of-context objections; and, if that does not convince the audience, use ad hominem arguments by accusing the researcher himself of sloppy scientific discipline or even outright fraud.

In the early days of the impeccable research of the late Dr. J. B. Rhine similar debunking methods were used in comparatively low key against the then new parapsychological findings.

In the long run, however, each of the objections was carefully met by painstaking reduplication of basic psi experiments by over 200 professional researchers in over 27 nations during a 40-year period. Yet the harm was done by irresponsible detractors whose rationalistic and materialistic philosophical prejudices were threatened by valid

parapsychological findings. One may read an accurate history of this effort in D. Scott Rogo's *Parapsychology: A Century of Inquiry*.

Now, after over 40 years of painstaking evidence for the validity and reality of psi, we are still treated to the increased efforts of even larger numbers of naive scientists and threatened philosophers of 19th Century science who, often without any prior training in experimental parapsychology or real experience in the field of ESP or PK, have set themselves up as various self-appointed committees for the investigation of psychic phenomena.

Such groups are in fact usually not composed of open-minded, careful scientists trained in the field of parapsychological experimentation who really desire to research and to find the truth—whatever it might be—in a given situation. Rather, they are often “professional skeptics” zealously representing the “religion of Secular Humanism”, who, like over-credulous persons at the opposite end of the spectrum, are often the least qualified, by emotion and motivation to have the patience or predisposition to discover or admit anything that they do not want to hear or see.

We seem to have reached a point in the cultural history of Western civilization, where both “science” and “religion”, in their establishment forms, have failed to grasp the significance of the whole “psychic area” as the *natural* “link” between the “Sacred” and the “Profane.” In order to explore the reasons for this, it will be necessary to present here a brief resume of the background of the issue in the history of Western thought.

The Loss and Recovery of the “Primordial Tradition” of Intuition and Insight into the Psychic Dimension

1. *The Background: The Loss of the Primordial Tradition in the West.* It has long been recognized by historians of philosophy and science that Western civilization has undergone a radical shift in its basic approach to reality from the 17th Century “Age of Reason” and the 18th Century “Enlightenment” to the rise of the 19th Century physical and social sciences.

Even before this period, for at least five centuries since the 12th Century A.D., Western philosophers and theologians had been laying the groundwork for the change from a civilization orientated toward faith in, and the intuition of, transcendental worlds and higher spiritual and ethical dimensions in human values, to a new civilization which considered the “real” to be synonymous with the physical world alone.

In classical and late antiquity the Greek philosophers Pythagoras, Plato and Plotinus had developed systems of thought based upon the

Primordial Tradition of intuition and insight of India, Egypt, Persia and Greece. In this tradition, as summarized by Plato, the material or physical world is but a shadow or projection of the truly real world originating in the realm of cosmic mind, consciousness and spirit. The way human beings could know this reality "behind," "in" and "under" the phenomenal world was through the use of inner faculties of higher or rational intuition, rather than the mere physical observation and logical computation of data from the phenomenal world. It was generally agreed that only "opinion" based on the partial grasp of half truths and half illusions could be obtained by such empirical methods without recourse to the higher functions of intuitive consciousness.

But in the Fourth Century B.C., the 12th Century A.D., and finally in the 16th Century A.D., three major Western philosophers and their followers changed all of this. First, Plato's student Aristotle broke with his master's teachings and with the entire Primordial Tradition of the higher religions of the Ancient East, by asserting that real knowledge of things requires the use of the physical senses. This epistemological limitation laid the foundation for the materialist-rationalist point of view of the modern West.

The philosophy of Aristotle was adopted by the "Schoolmen" of Medieval Christianity, lead by St. Thomas Aquinas, who, beginning in the 12th Century, gradually moved Western Christian theology away from the solid Greek Platonic and Neo-Platonic foundation that had been laid for the Church by most of the Apostolic Fathers and Apologists from the Second to the Sixth Centuries A.D. The basic Aristotelian denial of the natural intuition of reliable data through the awakening and training of higher supersensory or subtle faculties of perception and cognition, led to the great monolithic edifice of Western logic as it was applied to Christian Revelation in the official Thomistic philosophy of the Roman Church from the medieval to the modern periods.

This development, in turn, paved the way for later secular forms of materialistic and rationalistic reductionism by conditioning Western culture to the idea that only the physically observable and logically computable is worthy of "scientific" endeavor, whether in the areas of natural and social sciences or religious studies.

By the 16th Century, René Descartes, the so-called "Father of Modern Philosophy" was able to assert that all reality could be neatly divided between (a) the "objective" realm of physical "extension" and (b) the "subjective" realm of "thought." Thus, "mind", now to be progressively limited to its logical-analytical functions, was believed to be rad-

ically distinct and separate from physical "objects" in material space and time. One could study things "scientifically" only through (a) physical empirical observation and (b) the logical analysis and computation of data received therefrom.

A whole host of Western philosophers of science and religion from Francis Bacon, John Locke and David Hume to Immanuel Kant now proceeded, by way of either affirmation or denial of the reality of the spiritual and transcendental dimensions, to accept this basic Aristotelian-Thomistic-Cartesian limitation of man's "natural" vision to a two dimensional world of physical observation and logical computation.

2. *The Effects of the Loss and the Revolutionary Consequences for Western Culture of Its Future Recovery.* The entire edifice of modern Western science and technology has been built upon this "natural" materialistic-rationalistic and reductionistic assumption. Of course, such a philosophical a priori, or arbitrary belief is by no means essential to "science" itself, either with regard to its content or its methodology. In its ancient Greek rootage, reaching back into the Primordial Tradition through Plato, "scientia" or "science" included not only the study of empirical forms of knowledge but also use of the higher, intuitive means of perception, yielding "gnosis", or knowledge of the inner psychic and spiritual side of man and the universe. The physical observation and logical computation of material data and behaviors, which is "modern science," was only one half of the original, necessary equation.

The consequences of this arbitrary limitation of "science" in the West have been terribly dehumanizing for modern man and have created a radical schism between science and religion, or, more properly, between our new, truncated "science" and human "spirituality" in all of its possible forms.

The only forms of "production" to count in the modern Western milieu, whether capitalist or communist, has been thus far only material production of physical objects. The very idea that man's happiness, fulfillment or success in this world could possibly be created primarily by "intangible" factors such as spirit, truth, beauty, inner peace, joy, love, sharing, forgiving and human victories over selfishness, greed, avarice, hatred, resentment, has been, largely, left out of our academic textbooks in psychology, or sociology, economics, political science and management. Everyone, secular capitalists and communists alike, seems to assume that physical and manipulable factors are all that is important in the creation of a perfect society.

Seldom in secular text books of schools, colleges and universities in the modern West do essential human spiritual values count as primary

factors. And yet we are just about at the brink of self-destruction as a civilization for the lack of a universal understanding of such inner human values among the peoples of the world.

The model by which we have looked at reality in the West has not been wide enough to contain a viable synthesis between modern "science" and universal, common forms of human religious or spiritual experience in Eastern or Western terms. This has caused a kind of schizophrenia in the soul of Western man, one which has also been exported since the 19th Century to non-Western, Eastern and other Third World cultures along with (otherwise good) Western sciences and technologies.

Today many people in Third World cultures are not able to reconcile their "scientific" Western type education with their own ethnic, cultural, religious and spiritual heritages.

But as I have said elsewhere, the latest research in the "para-sciences," or "future sciences" of consciousness research, parapsychology and parapsysics, life-energies research, the new physics and new Transpersonal psychologies, have indicated that the 16th-19th Century models for reality that we have used as a basis for "modern science," with its materialistic-rationalistic-reductionistic assumptions, are simply not good enough to carry psychology, physics, biology, medicine, or religion, very much further into this century.¹⁵

Many feel that when the new data from these "future sciences" are taken into account we may well experience what Thomas Kuhn has described as "the structure of a scientific revolution," a radical shift in paradigms or models of reality both for science and for religion. When the psi data that now wait to be reviewed are finally digested and assimilated by the world's scientific and philosophical establishments, we may indeed experience what the British writer Arthur Koestler has called an approaching "Second Copernican Revolution."

But, we might legitimately ask, is this the first time in the history of Western civilization that an attempt will have been made to reintroduce the "Primordial Tradition," with its perennial intuitions and insights into the multidimensional nature of man and the cosmos, into a skeptical, reduced and impaired Western tradition? The answer is, clearly, no. There have been other attempts, rather persistent attempts which, for various historical reasons, have failed.

3. *The Survival of Fragments of Gnosis, and Earlier Attempts to Recover the Primordial Tradition through Psychic Research.* As I have said in *The Psychic Roots of Ancient Wisdom and Primitive Christian Gnosis*, when the original Christian "gnosis," reflected in the "logia" or sayings of Jesus and earlier authentic New Testament writings of Paul, failed to take

sufficient hold, and the early Christian movement began to move in the direction of codification of the "message" and institutionalization of the Church, the proto-gnostic, Platonic mystical ideas of the "Primordial Tradition" were gradually lost within the mainstream of the Roman religious establishment. Nevertheless, underground currents of genuine "gnosis" have survived and persisted throughout the intervening ages, in spite of (a) extravagant heresies on the one side, and (b) a hostile, inveterate rationalistic skepticism on the other.

Dr. Andrija Puharich has written a succinct resume of past attempts to resurrect what I have called the "Primordial Tradition" during the subsequent history of Western civilization. "The Platonic ideas were carried on by the Gnostics (excluded and persecuted by the early Church Fathers), and practiced by the alchemists. While the Roman Church ruled Europe with scholastic Thomism and burned witches (remote viewing and metal bending practitioners), the more empirically-minded alchemists and astrologers produced Copernicus, Kepler, Bruno, Galileo and Newton. Georgi di Santillana has called Newton the 'last of the Great Babylonian magicians.' The victory of Giordano Bruno, Galilei Galileo, and Isaac Newton over the scholastic Aristotlean-Thomistic forces of the Roman Church laid the foundations for modern empirical science. But this did not mean that the Platonic idealists had gone into eclipse.

"In the eighteenth century the great Swedish scientist, Emmanuel Swedenborg was doing real-time remote viewing experiments that had such a conclusive quality about them that his friend, the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant incorporated this data into the formulation of his great Neo-platonic 'idealistic' philosophy. In succession, the alchemists became chemists; the fluid-magnetizers became electricians; the astrologers became astronomers; and the philosophers became physicists.

"For a time it seemed as if the issue between the materialists and the idealists had faded away with the secure triumph of materialistic science. When Clerk Maxwell brought together in a unified mathematical treatment the relation between matter-forces and the (immaterial) light waves; and this prediction was experimentally confirmed by Heinrich Hertz, and Nikola Tesla in the early 1880's, it seemed that there was nothing left to argue about.

"However, between 1880 and 1900 the materialistic cookie began to crumble in ways not to be clearly recognized until almost 100 years later in the appearance of the *Iceland Papers*. What happened is that in the examination of the matter-light radiation physics Max Planck discovered that the energy was emitted in 'energy packets' or quanta.

Albert Einstein in examining events moving at or near the velocity of light, formulated the Special Theory of Relativity, and later the General Theory of Relativity. These two theories (quantum mechanics) and (relativity) had within them seeds . . . which it is believed will resolve the matter-mind problem.

"But the idealistic camp was not idle during this past century. During the 1880's there appeared 'psychical research' societies in England, France and the United States of America. The methods of empirical science were applied to the study of human 'psychical' behaviour. These efforts are best exemplified by the researches of Sir William Crookes, on D. D. Home, a man with paranormal powers. Crookes documented impeccably the ability of D. D. Home to perform action at a distance events, and remote viewing, as well as levitation. With the publication of Sir William Crookes' 'psychic' experiments, many nineteenth century scientists rallied to suppress this type of research, just as had happened in the 16th century Church suppression of the forefathers of the nineteenth century scientists."¹⁶

Now in the 20th Century the "Primordial Tradition" has resurfaced again in the forms of experimental parapsychology and parapsysics, consciousness studies, life-energies research, investigation of putative psi-fields and exploration of "New paradigms for the convergence of science and spirituality, in universal terms." Will it succeed at last?

New Psychic Explorations of a Multi-dimensional Universe of Spirit and Space, and of the Sacred and the Profane

1. *New Paradigms for Science and Spirituality in Universal Terms Through Psi Faculties.* Today there are many adventurous researchers in what I have called the "future sciences" of parapsychology and parapsysics, who are convinced that we are composed of an interlocking series of bioenergetic fields in a multidimensional universe. They would say that we are capable of developing unsuspected powers of consciousness through the extension of these fields into extended space.

Some competent scientists today really are suggesting that what I have described as "new images of man and the cosmos" have made a strange but significant pilgrimage ". . . from ancient religion to future science." A number of leading thinkers, physicists like Costa de Beauregard and Nobel-prize laureate Brian Josephson and biologists like Rupert Sheldrake, have also been convinced by their own investigations, that an understanding of psi phenomena and human psychic experiences could be extremely important to the future of science, religion and human culture.¹⁷

They have examined frontier areas of research in "life energies" as well as "psychic energies," putative "psi-fields" (or "psychotronic-fields" as the latter are called by Russian and Eastern European researchers). Models suggested by many scientists in these areas have arisen, often contrary to their own previous expectations, from the data of their observations of psychic phenomena in the laboratory.

The late physicist Ernst Mach, postulated "parallel universes" or "paraphysical hyperspaces", which would overlay and penetrate one another much in the same way as radio waves inhabit our physical space undetected by the unaided human ear. These putative "parallel universes" would, hypothetically at least, be detectable and reachable only through adjustments in the normative modes of functioning of the human consciousness and its attendant mind-brain mechanisms.

Human beings are thought, by those who have accepted such hypotheses, to be capable of learning to develop psychic and spiritual powers, or "subtle faculties of perception" and a higher consciousness, through which they could communicate with one another and even affect the properties of the mental, physical and social environments. A few would even claim that the previously mentioned "parallel universes", composed of higher frequencied fields of energies, coexist with our own "earth-plane" and may, upon occasion, be "tuned-into" by sensitive individuals, through the higher modes of functioning of consciousness operating within them. Such "other worlds of spirit and space" in which the human dead might live, have, in fact, been claimed by ancient seers, mystics and mediums, as well as prophets, masters and gurus throughout the ages. These have claimed that "higher worlds" of spirit and space are "more real" than our own mundane world.

Such parallel universes, if indeed they exist, whether in consciousness or hyperspace, would perhaps account for the countless visions of so-called "heaven-worlds" and "astral planes" that are described by mystics, saints and other psychic persons after visions and "out-of-the-body" experiences. Tales of such things as apparitions of dead saints and spirits, revelatory visions, teleportations, so-called materializations of persons and objects from "other dimensions," some of the more paraphysical and psiological types of "UFO sightings," so-called "spirit photography" and the so-called "electronic-voices-on-tape" phenomena, whatever they may be in themselves in scientific terms, nevertheless often implicitly carry with them the essentially religious claim that such "other worlds" really do exist.

It is those psychical researchers willing to postulate such possibilities who ultimately will be able to pursue a fruitful dialogue with religion,

I feel, rather than those parapsychologists who would arbitrarily limit the scope of their discipline to those relatively "safe" areas of psi which they think conventional science might accept. In my estimation it is "conventional science" which will be shifting soon in any event and it would be short-sighted of parapsychologists to try to "feather their nest" in a crumbling house.

2. *Psi: Psychic Warfare or a Humane Hope for Healing and Immortality?* We read in the popular press today rumors that both Russian and American defense agencies are involved in a "psi-warfare race." *Time* magazine recently carried an article reporting that there are indications that the use of psychic techniques for warfare is actually being explored by the Governments both of the USSR and the United States. Senator Claybourne Pell of Rhode Island is reported to have read into the U.S. Congressional Record the story of his visit to psi-research laboratories in Russia, and discussed the real potential of the use of psi powers in business, government, education and the sciences, as well as for defense. Martin Ebon has discussed what he perceives to be the potential value of these powers for warfare and espionage in his *Psychic Warfare: Threat or Illusion?* He claims that the U.S. Government has been exploring psi for these possibilities. If we can affect one another's behavior by our thoughts, that indeed would be a tremendous weapon. We all know that this idea is an old one. It was called sorcery in the ancient world and black magic or witchcraft in the Middle Ages. Aside from the charge of an uncritical superstition, which old-guard rationalists-materialists might raise, this is perhaps one of the reasons that reputation-conscious scientists, scholars and politicians seem to want to stay away from being publicly associated with those who are known to be doing this kind of psi research.

My own interest in all of this is of a spiritual nature and admittedly has something to do with the clerical garb that I wear. While I am not comforted, of course, by the thought of the possible use of psi for warfare, I am enthusiastic about its possible uses for what Eliade has called "breaking down the profane sensibilities," as well as developing personal psychospiritual quotas, building a higher consciousness open to alternative "higher worlds," and increasing mankind's potential on this planet, for peace, healing and human understanding. There are very real ways that we could use natural human psi faculties in both scientific and spiritual pursuits for such an evolution of a "new species" and for the development of a "higher-consciousness" in the human race. It is a thoroughly rational proposition that such a "higher consciousness" could conceivably help us to overcome and solve, with God's help and the help of "Higher Intelligence," many of the problems of war, disease, hatred and poverty that we have created on the planet.

Psi Experience as an Existential Basis for a Personal Religious Ethics and The Immortality Affirmation

Soon after my own involvement in psychical research, I became convinced through personal encounters, that psychical and mystical experiences of one kind or another had formed and continue to form the existential and historical basis both of human ethics as sensitivity to, and empathy for, the needs of others, and of the human belief in immortality. I have reported on a number of my own experiences in this area in two of my books, *Religion, Science, and Psyche* and *Spirits and Cosmic Paradigms*.

There is also ample evidence that ordinary human beings can be taught the controlled uses of psi faculties and can experience for themselves the underlying psychic unity of all life-forms and the reality of the evidence for human immortality. If I could really "feel what you feel" and "know what you know" because of a mysterious "psi faculty" in me, then that "psi faculty" would be one of the bases of my ethics, or of my concern for you. I will not hurt you, *if* I really feel you to be *part of myself*. No amount of law-and-order that a society sets up on its statutes can ultimately prevent its own people from doing criminal things, or hurting others, unless each person can learn to feel that he or she and all other persons are internally related to one another somehow, and to the very Source of the universe itself.

All living things must be sensed by an individual to be part of "one tether-of-life." We must, as a species, come to perceive that we live together in a living, psycho-dynamic universe. Typical words of many of those who have had the "near-death experience" include such statements as: "I felt that I now knew that there is no more important thing to do while still physically alive on this earth, than to cultivate loving and creative relationships with all living beings."

There are those who themselves witness the reality of such psychic and spirit phenomena, who would say—like Elisabeth Kübler-Ross—"I not only believe it, but I know it," because "I've been there (to the land of the dead) and back," or ". . . because so-and-so has been there and he or she has appeared to me." But it is precisely this kind of right-brain activity, "spiritistic mysticism," or real psycho-spiritual, intuitive-perceptual function, (or "gnosis"), that the more worldly persons who have created the dominant reductionistic, materialistic and rationalistic versions of science, philosophy and theology in modern Western civilization for the past few centuries have characteristically disdained to cultivate, or even admit into the realm of reality.

The left-hemisphere of the brain has been described by Roger Sperry, Robert Ornstein and others as the locus of our rational, logical,

linear, verbal activities. It is because of the use, they would say, of this left-hemisphere that we have developed the grand scale of physical science and technology that has given us so many of the material blessings of modern civilization all over the world. But they have also warned that the sole emphasis on logical, left-hemisphere functions may have caused us to ignore or underdevelop our right-hemisphere, our intuitive side. For the most part, rationalistic-materialists do not even suspect that a wide range of psychic or mystical experiences themselves constitute a *possibly valid methodological approach* available to us in answering the greatest questions of life and death. Such persons, dominated by "logical" left-hemisphere thinking only, do not suspect that there are, in fact, viable alternative paradigms for the reintegration of "science" (albeit a new kind of "science") with human "spirituality," in universal non-sectarian terms.

It is intuitive "right-brain" activity that our greatest masters, sages, and saints have developed which has given birth to human beliefs in immortality in the first place. Saints and mystics have often claimed to (a) have experienced revelatory contacts with higher orders of being and with the human dead; (b) know that man is immortal through "near-death experiences" or "out-of-the-body experiences" of their own and (c) experience other forms of mediumistic and shamanistic phenomena as "natural" occurrences. I would suggest that it is as a result of such "right-hemisphere" or intuitive experiences of saints and sages that the rest of less psychically developed mankind has, in fact, learned to affirm the reality of "heaven worlds," human immortality and life-after-death. This has led to the formulation of various creeds and cults in age after age, including Christianity itself.

Indeed, such great impressions of the various modes of immortality have not been affirmed in what we today would call "scientific terms," but in the code languages of religion, myth, poetry, literature and folk cultures. But they are, nevertheless, quite real indicators of the human potential to experience transcendent dimensions in this life and beyond. And I would suggest that you and I, and countless others from age to age, can experience their reality, provided that we do not close the doors of our minds through uninformed skepticism and the adoption of inappropriate, reductionistic methodologies in advance.

New Paradigms and Methodologies for Psi and for Convergence of Science and Spirituality in the Global Village

1. *Psychic Experience is Not Irrelevant to True Spiritual Development—In Spite of the Claims of Many Religionists, East and West. The greatest*

challenge to the survival of human belief in a Transcendent Order behind, in, or under the phenomenal world today is a world-view shaped by three or more centuries of rationalistic, reductionistic materialism. Spiritually aware persons do have one, and perhaps only one, hope to turn back its otherwise inevitable tide. That hope is that some scientists and some religionists will once again turn their attention to the study and cultivation of those higher forms of consciousness and experience, including psychic-spiritual experiences, through which the whisperings of "immortality," "resurrection," a "new Heaven and a new earth" can be brought back into humanity's sight and hearing.

Unfortunately, neither the majority of scientists or of theologians, as yet, see the relevance of parapsychology, parapsysics, consciousness studies, or psychical research on spirit phenomena, to their views of man, nature, or reality. Many religionists, East and West, have forgotten that "mystical" or "spiritual" experience takes many forms and shapes. There are at least the following types: (1) "Pure, Formless Mysticism"; (2) "Archetypical-Symbolic Mysticism"; (3) "Spiritistic Mysticism"; (4) "Clairvoyant Mysticism" and (5) "Nature Mysticism." Of these, types 2, 3, and 4, are clearly recognizable as containing the ordinary markings of psychic phenomena. Even 1 and 5, while not involving perhaps the "form" or characteristics of what we ordinarily call "psychic phenomena," nevertheless directly involve basic transformations of the psyche and its customary modes of perception and evaluation of reality. In order that meaningful studies in religion and psychical research might take place, studies that are not arbitrarily limited or reductionist, certain unexamined a priori's in both Oriental and Occidental philosophical and religious traditions would have to be squarely faced and exposed to the light. The first is that psychic and spiritual experiences are radically distinct, apposite phenomena, i.e., the often repeated non-truth that all psychic experience is somehow unimportant or, at worst, an impediment to true spiritual development.

A careful analysis will reveal that, in spite of such things as warnings by Patanjali or Buddha, the so-called Deuteronomic prohibitions, or the denigrations of psychic experiences by many modern religionists, Western mystics and Eastern guru's alike, psychic experience has been the cradle or vehicle out of which many of the central religious insights, revelations, myths and even ethical reformations of mankind have emerged. Certainly this was so with the experiences of the Biblical patriarchs and prophets, with Abraham, Moses, Jesus, St. Paul and St. John on Patmos. The human psyche or consciousness is the instrument through which psychospiritual transformations take shape and manifest in this world; therefore, in a very real sense, psychic experience is integrally related to spiritual development.

2. *Religious and Scientific Paradigms Cognizant of Psyche and Spirit are Prerequisite to Authentic Formulations of Religion for the New Age.* The many varied types of Eastern and Western religious traditions are themselves radically divided over the role of psychical and mystical phenomena in human religious and cultural experience. Thus, it is not only modern scientists who dispute the reality of these faculties from rationalistic, reductionistic, and materialistic "left-brain consciousness"; but also it is, in the West, modern theologians and church administrators, priest, rabbis and ministers and, in the East, Hindu Swamis and Buddhist Monks alike, many of whom appear to be equally rationalistic and who have never known the psychic and mystical experiences of the founders and saints of their own traditions or the *original contexts* of the various warnings against the pursuit of psychic powers out of egoic or selfish motivation.

Nevertheless, for my own part, I would like to suggest that the psychology of human perception as understood in the ancient esoteric systems of the Asian yogas, which not only understood the psychic faculties, but also prescribed the self-regulation of the observer-participants' human consciousness itself and the learning of the use of intuition skillfully, may in fact be the presently missing key to the future of parapsychology, to putative exploration of "other worlds of spirit and space," to the development of the new holistic sciences and the new psychospiritual and psychophysical technologies of tomorrow.

With this in mind, some contemporary scholars and scientists, East and West, have begun to take an interest in the study of yoga systems and their understanding of human psychic faculties. I have publications pending in this area. In the light of my own rather "psychospiritual-evolutionist" and Teilhardian or Aurobindian perspectives, and in light of contemporary insights from emerging future-sciences of parapsychology, parapsysics and consciousness studies which I have tried to summarize in my books, I have concluded that research in comparative mysticism, psychic phenomena and the forms of human psychospiritual awareness and psychophysical integration known in ancient esoteric religion systems and in yoga, should be central to comparative religious studies and to the life-sciences of the future.

3. *Psi, Mysticism and Science: A Second Copernican Revolution?* At the very least, as serious scholars we religionists must be prepared to concede that psiology is a fascinating area of research which could ultimately revolutionize our whole view of human nature, physical reality, or immortality and human purpose in the universe. As the former Bishop of Southwark in the Church of England, Dr. Mervin Stockwood once pointed out, we might think, for example, of the cultural impact,

the sociological and psychological changes in the human species, human society and human relations, national and global, which could occur if subtle psychic and spiritual faculties, by which we might perceive the reality of human "immortality", were *understood* before we started with our individual belief systems.

If what I have called the "new sciences" of consciousness and spirit and a new psycho-dynamic, multidimensional view of the universe were taught in the textbooks of our schools and universities, the implications could obviously be tremendous for religion, culture and mankind's understanding of itself and its destiny.

The late British writer, Arthur Koestler, thought that the psychic sciences could bring us to what he called a "Second Copernican Revolution" greater than the first. And for this reason, when he died, he left the bulk of his estate, nearly a half million dollars, to establish a chair of parapsychology at a university in the UK. But it is only to be hoped that that very field of parapsychology itself can expand its own presently limited perspectives, horizons and methodologies sufficiently in order to rise to the tremendous challenge which lies before it.

And for the scientific community at large, I would heartily recommend the suggestion of Brazilian psychical researcher Pedro McGregor that: "If science were to ply its enormous knowledge of electronics, biochemistry, and nuclear physics, systematically to the discovery of the spiritual nature of man, it could well make a breakthrough in the understanding of our nature and our predicament equal to [or far greater than] the impact of the discovery of how to split the atom."¹⁸ Pedro McGregor has also seen another central point that I have been trying to make to both scientists and religionists. Any new religious philosophies, and/or scientific paradigms or methodologies that emerge as successful ones for dealing with what Marshal McLuhan has described as the coming "pluralistic global-village culture" of tomorrow, will have to be ones which unite the full scope of the imagination expressed in the myth, symbol, "real-magic" (psychic phenomena), liturgy and poetry of all mankind's authentic ancient and modern religious and spiritual quests of East and West with a vision of the global (psychic-and-spiritual as well as physical-and-social) sciences of the future: "Religions, to have any meaning today, must take into consideration such diversities as the energy of the quasars, the millions of billions of possible worlds in the Universe, and the whole complex range of scientific knowledge here on Earth, as well as the moral and spiritual values by which the intelligent principle works. In a future world inhabited by super-civilization, religion will have an expression and a form beyond our present understanding."¹⁹

It is to the development of the required "higher consciousness" and of that expression and form of religion for a New Age, beyond our present understanding, that we must now turn our attention, if we are each to save and to fulfill the best in our own religious traditions for a better world tomorrow.

We do have ample historical evidence to suggest that any tradition or form of religion which can do justice to the psychic and spiritual faculties of man and to the universal reality of the inner "intimations of Immortality" which he can receive through those faculties, should prosper in that New Age. But both religion and science will require new paradigms and new methodologies for understanding the psi factor, the currently "missing link between the Sacred and the Profane" in Western civilization. For those who have "the eyes to see and the ears to hear," the process of the convergence of science and spirituality, East and West, has already begun in the global village.

NOTES

1. F. R. Dodds, *The Greeks & The Irrational*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968.
2. Kenneth Ring, *Life At Death*. New York: Coward, McCann, & Geohagan, 1980. Michael Sablom, *Recollections of Death*. New York: Simon & Shuster, 1982. For evidence of the transcultural nature of mystical experiences involving psi phenomena as their basis, leading to belief in immortality, see: Robert Crookall, *The Supreme Adventure: Analysis of Psychic Communications*. Cambridge, England: James Clarke & Co., 1974. Karlis Osis & Erlendur Haraldsson, *At The Hour of Death*. New York: Avon Books, 1977. Stanislav & Christina Grof, *Beyond Death: The States of Consciousness*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1980.
3. J. Shoneberg Setzer, "Making the Mystics Make Sense", *Quarterly Journal of the Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship*. V (Autumn, 1973), pp. 226-247; VI (Winter, 1974), pp. 21-40; VI (Spring, 1974), pp. 80-88.
4. Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series LXXVI, 1964. Translated from French by W. R. Trask.
5. Ernesto de Martino, *The World of Magic*. New York: Pyramid Communications, 1972. Translated from Italian by Paul Saye White.
6. Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth: The Primordial Tradition*. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.
7. John Rossner, *Toward Recovery of the Primordial Tradition*. Vol. I. *Toward A Parapsychology of Religion: Book One—From Ancient Magic to Future Technology; Book Two—From Ancient Religion to Future Science*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1979. Vol. II, *The Primordial Tradition in Contemporary Experience: Book One—Religion, Science, & Psyche; Book Two—Spirits & Cosmic Paradigms; Book Three—The Psychic Roots of Ancient Wisdom & Primitive Christian Gnosis*. Lanham, MD: The University Press of America, 1983.
8. Willis W. Harmon, *An Incomplete Guide to the Future*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1976, pp. 95-6.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
10. G. Stanley Whitby "On Deuteronomic prohibitions," in *Life, Death & Psychological Research*. ed. by J. D. Pearce Higgins & G. Stanley Whitby. London: Rider Press, 1973.
11. Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28, ff. For other psychic & spirit phenomena in the life of Jesus and throughout the canonical Old & New Testaments see: James F.

Malcolm, Ph.D., *Psychic Influences in World Religion*. Stansted, Essex: The Spiritualist National Union, no date.

12. I Corinthians 12: 28-30; 14: 26-33.

13. Cited by James F. Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

14. Epistle of St. Jerome to Pope Damasus, in Preface to the Latin Vulgate version of the New Testament.

15. John Rossner, *From Ancient Magic to Future Technology, & From Ancient Religion to Future Science*.

16. Andrijah Puharich, M.D., "Preface", *Iceland Papers*. Amhearst, Wisconsin: Essentia Research Associates, 1979.

17. Brian Josephson, "Foreword", *Iceland Papers*, ed. by Andrijah Puharich, M.D.

18. Pedro McGregor, *Jesus of the Spirits*. New York: Stein & Day, 1967, p. 237.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

DISCUSSION

GROSSO: First of all I would just like to compliment John Rossner for making this bold assertion about the close identity or the interweaving of the psychic and the spiritual. I think you are right and you demonstrated it by various examples. In my own paper, I will add to your own claim here by showing in some detail how the rise of primitive Christianity cannot be really understood apart from the psychic. I would make one comment now and that is about the spiritual significance of the psychic. One purpose of this type of convention is to find new frameworks of meaning so that the broader and deeper significance of the psychic can be understood. The near death experience illustrates how the potential meaning of these experiences is sometimes repressed. Most people have them in a medical setting that is primarily materialistic in its outlook. So it seems to me that the task before us is to restore the spiritual significance to the psychic.

ROSSNER: I think that is very important. There has to be a forum for this kind of study, this kind of project. It has dawned on me that most natural and social scientists do not have any conception of a "psychic science." There is instant recognition everywhere today for psychological science, sociological science, political science, economic science. But where do you even find the words "psychic science", except in so-called "fringe" groups that have been pushed out of the established universities and schools? Where do you find the term "spiritual science" or the idea that there could be "metapsychical" rules? Why do the traditional churches not use their vast resources to support psychic research, parapsychological research, consciousness studies, life-energy studies and other new explorations of paradigms which are more congenial to the reality of "human inner spaces"?

Today we cannot find people, who are mostly given to an a priori

assumption of materialistic, rationalistic models in universities, even to consider the validity of "psychic and spiritual sciences." You would think that the churches at least would be able to relate the psyche (i.e. soul) to the spirit in meaningful academic terms. But they have not. At the same time there are groups of self-appointed, professional skeptics among scientists who have formed themselves into various ad hoc committees to "investigate" psychics in North America. And they are often greatly motivated by a form of a priori anti-religious stance which is threatened by psi phenomena. They are often motivated by rationalistic, materialistic, atheistic Humanism. They would say psi events *cannot* happen, therefore all psychic researchers are bound to be either misled, or are not using psychic data correctly and all "self-professed psychics" are bound to be frauds or psychiatrically deluded persons. The people who are saying such things are themselves fanatically devoted to the cause. One of them told a friend privately that what they are really after is all theistic religion—Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism—with all their "supernaturalism" and "superstition." Politically, the world religions are too strong. But the professional skeptics have to do it indirectly by showing that their view of a world open to influence by mind and spirit is impossible. Now such professional skeptics are bright enough to recognize the threat of parapsychology to their particular philosophy and anti-religious bias. But theologians are apparently not bright enough to recognize this, unfortunately, and the Church has not awakened to what is really going on in this regard.

What I would like to suggest is that people in the churches pay more attention to the psi area as a natural and social science and as the "missing link" or mid-ground between theology and science, between the sacred and the profane. If no one pays attention to the psi factor this will feed the rationalistic materialistic position where the psyche is left out of scientific investigation. Then there is nothing left in common between natural science and things of the spirit. The world is polarized today between people who assert the transcendent in religious beliefs and those who are trying to assert a kind of finite rationalistic and materialistic reductionism. I think that is really where it is at. I think it is time that new studies along this line were undertaken for the development of new paradigms for science and spirituality in the Global Village.

HALL: I have several things to say, John, about this very interesting paper. The first is "Amen" particularly for the last things you said, which describes what I was trying to point to as the dynamo-objective coupling. When the skeptical inquirers try to approach parapsychology their position seems to me almost unassailable. You cannot bring them

to any kind of actual weighing of evidence because they are into this dynamo-objective coupling situation. You hit one of my buzz words with archetypes. Then you said "merely archetypes" as if archetypes were only such things as a vision of Ezekiel, as if they were only impersonal models, images of things. That made me want to say something about the personal quality of archetypes. You also used the crown from the Cabbalistic Tree of Life as one of the metaphors. That can be employed to say that the most common archetypal experience that anyone has is the sense of "I-ness." If the ego is based upon the archetype of the Self this centered sense of "I" is an archetypal experience and it is the most common thing that we have. Now in terms of the Tree of Life analogy, we ordinarily think of "I" as being the identity of oneself in Malkuth just at the very base of the Cabbalistic Tree of Life. The archetypal experience as such would be the sense of there being a structure above or beyond Malkuth in the Tree. But the mystical experience, as I would conceive it in that model, would be something like the sense of one's location, but also the sense of this entire structure of the Tree of Life existing simultaneously no matter where one is located upon it at any particular moment. That would be the kind of odd state that Jung was trying to describe as the ego experiencing itself, as if it is the object of the superordinate subject, which I think would be what the mystical experience is like.

ROSSNER: I think that is very important. There is, however, the problem of those who would like to talk about archetypes without understanding the full implications of what an archetype is, in the sense that you described. They would very much like to be able to eliminate the psychic-spiritistic form of experience by using the archetypal as a gloss. That is commonly done by a certain type of people and it is wrong; you are right. I want to give just one practical example from Ishmaelian Gnosticism, which has been described by Henry Corben in a book called *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*. It sheds a tremendous light on the question of duality and non-duality, the inner and the outer, the whole business of relationship between the guru, guide, or teacher as an actual physical or spiritual person "out-there" and the archetypal process within one which is ignited by encountering that gifted person.

Corben has said that at the beginning of the spiritual path the mystic has an awakening experience in which he meets the "Guide of Light out there" on the path as another person. The "Guide of Light" could be a physical person or event, but the "Guide of Light" can also be an angelic being or a spirit, an apparition or a vision. But meeting that "Guide of Light" whether there is a physical person there or a spirit-

guide or an angelic presence, becomes an archetypal encounter situation. Through that meeting of the "Guide of Light out there" the neophyte becomes aware of the "Guide of Light in here" (in his or her own innermost being) who has been sleeping. The "Guide of Light" or "guru out there" awakens ultimately, the person's own *inner* Guide of Light. The "guru within" is awakened by the "guru without." It is the point of encounter between "the Christ out there" and "the Christ in here" in Christian terms.

Now this kind of realization means that you can never really have an Immanent God *versus* a Transcendent God; you must have both. And you can never have a true spiritual encounter with a physical person or a spirit that is not also psychic and archetypal, if it really does its job of awakening in your soul and mind the transformative process in which you gradually become "one-with" the "Guide of Light within." We have to recognize that the archetypal, spiritistic and psychic or clairvoyant forms of mysticism usually occur together. We cannot separate one from the other simply because we do not want to accept the fact that the psyche and the psychic faculties of the human soul are involved in integrally authentic spiritual transformation.

A. BALSLEV: Well, I found your paper very interesting. I would like to mention that this morning, if I had mentioned the supernormal powers enlisted in the third chapter of the *Yoga Sutra* as a response to Steven Rosen's paper, that was only to bring to his attention that there does exist a conceptual structure which is dualistic and is not found to be incompatible with psi phenomena. You mentioned that 90 percent of the swamis and the Christian priests that you have talked with found the psychical powers incompatible with the spiritual quest.

ROSSNER: Not incompatible, exactly, but irrelevant.

A. BALSLEV: Now I would support these 90 percent and say that if the Yoga school has mentioned these, it is not in order to make this the goal of a spiritual enterprise. The quest for liberation and the desire on the other hand to obtain these siddhis or psychical powers cannot go hand in hand. In fact, the *Yoga Sutra* mentions this in order to say first of all as a matter of fact that the Yogi who proceeds in this path would automatically obtain these powers. But he is also warned that, if he pursues these goals, then he has fallen prey to something which is not the same as a spiritual quest.

ROSSNER: I do not think that you have understood what I was trying to say. Nowhere did I say, or did Patanjali say, that the goal of Yoga was the attainment of these psychic powers. The goal is self-realization or self-transformation and the attainment of the Divine Consciousness. But, if one reads the *Yoga Sutra* thoroughly, in Patanjali's own words,

the Siddhis, or psychic-spiritual powers are not really condemned. Patanjali recognized that we have to be able to navigate the faculties of the psyche and to understand them because the psyche or mind is the midground between the spiritual and the physical vehicles. The yogic adept must be aware of this area and know how to navigate it.

It is essential to master the Siddhis. Not all 108 must be mastered by every sadhah, but whatever one comes as a part of the unfolding of a process of spiritual awakening. But it is the attitude to detachment and non-egoic involvement that Patanjali is concerned with. The usual approach that I have heard from Hindu swamis as well as Christian priests is "don't get involved with that." They would simply warn people who are beginning to awaken to psi experiences to have nothing to do with them. Hence they are not using what is really written in Patanjali to help their people. Patanjali wrote his warnings within a context of familiarity with uncontrolled psychic and spiritual powers which could be used by undeveloped persons for egoic purposes. It is this that he is concerned with, not psi powers as used by the saints and god-men of the world's religions.