

## **Parapsychology & Transpersonal Psychology: "Anomalies" to be Explained Away or Spirit to Manifest?**

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It's a real pleasure to be here today and I look forward to giving this talk with anticipation. I've already stirred up quite a bit of excitement, judging by comments I've gotten, by having the word *spirit* in the title, and also by asking, in my recent e-mailed questionnaire to PA members, about the importance of spiritual values in motivating them to become parapsychologists. I'm glad to have stirred up this excitement, because I'm not happy with the current state of parapsychology, and I want to stimulate some thinking about that, which I think will be helped by excitement.

To give us some context, I want to do a brief update on where popular culture in the United States is. Table 1 shows some May, 2001 Gallup poll results. From it you can see that a majority of the United States population believes in psychic healing or mind/body healing, up eight percent from 11 years ago, and well over a third of the population believes in such phenomena as ESP, haunted houses, that the spirits of the dead can return, telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition.

<b>Belief</b>	<b>Yes 2001 %</b>	<b>Yes 1990 %</b>	<b>Δ %</b>
Psychic healing; or mind/body healing	<b>54</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>+8%</b>
ESP or extrasensory perception	50	49	+1
That houses can be haunted	<b>42</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>+13</b>
Spirits of dead can come back	<b>38</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>+13</b>
Telepathy	36	36	0
Clairvoyance, power of mind to know past & predict future	<b>32</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>+6</b>
Mental communication w the dead	<b>28</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>+10</b>
Reincarnation	25	21	+4
Channeling	15	11	+4

Table 1: Gallup Poll Results, 2001 and 1990. Significant changes between 1990 and 2001 shown in bold type.

Obviously the logical conclusion that can be drawn from this data is that, given the enormous cultural interest in the topics we study in parapsychology, the study of these phenomena must be a major field of study, widely and generously supported. Yes?

Hah!

What's wrong?

### **Substantive Progress, But Still No Acceptance:**

It's quite appropriate that this meeting of the PA is organized in conjunction with the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Parapsychology Foundation, as I've been professionally active in the field of parapsychology for more than 45 years, and became interested in it just about 50 years ago. My first grant to do parapsychological research, while I was still a college sophomore, came from Eileen J. Garrett and the Parapsychology Foundation in 1956. It was to study hypnotically induced out of the body experiences (OBES).

In terms of the substance of our field, I've seen a number of exciting discoveries in these 50 years. Among them are the remote viewing procedure, which seems to give some of the best psi yields in the field, as well as the ganzfeld procedure. Both of these approaches also show that we've learned a lot about handling free response data in an objective fashion, insofar as evaluating whether psi is present (although we still cannot handle the free response data in a well quantified fashion, such that we can do good functional research). Further, I've been impressed by the geomagnetic and sidereal time correlates of ESP findings, by various studies using physiological responses to detect psi, and by psychic healing research, as well as many other findings. In spite of the progress in learning more about psi, however, our field is not accepted.

One of our major goals in these 50 years has been acceptance by the scientific establishment. We want bright people who have research money and access to the scientific journals and expertise to see the importance of our field, agree that we have important phenomena, and help us in our research. I understand and agree with this attempt to gain acceptance by the scientific establishment! It's inspired excellent quality work, as well as having many other things to say for it, and yet.....

As part of this attempt to gain acceptance by mainstream science, we often present psi as an *anomaly*, hoping that using this term, which is used in other fields of science, will increase our chance of acceptance. Sometimes I've used the

term when it's strategically useful, but generally I've never liked anomaly: it trivializes psi phenomena.

I looked at my college dictionary to recheck the definition, and found that anomaly meant "...deviation from the common rule; irregularity; something that deviates in excess of normal variation." The synonym given for *anomaly* was *paradox*. With the connotations of this kind of definition, I think you can see that it has a tendency to trivialize psi phenomena and to undercut their possible revolutionary implications for scientific thinking. Given the resistance to psi that I will discuss later, having a word that implicitly trivializes psi helps to dismiss it.

So our work has not led to scientific acceptance of our field, with the possible exception of military intelligence applications, in which a lot of research money was spent. But I think most people would consider that a mixed blessing, as well as something highly variable: there was a lot of military and intelligence agency research money for some years, but it's all pretty much disappeared.

I think the main reason for the lack of acceptance is that there is a deep and powerful resistance to psi phenomena, a resistance we have not dealt with adequately. In looking for acceptance by mainstream science, we have been very rational, and our approach tends to assume that the lack of acceptance is a rational matter. After all, that's the way the science game is *supposed* to be played! If only we had better replicability, or a comprehensive theory of psi, or theories of psi that integrated psi with mainstream knowledge, surely we would be accepted? But it hasn't worked. I'll talk more about this resistance below.

### **Another Path? Not An Anomaly, But Fundamental Exploration**

What I want to focus on today could be seen as another, supplementary path for parapsychology, a path that involves its transpersonal psychological aspects. This is a path that has always been there as "psychical research," but it's a path that is rather neglected, if not implicitly repressed, in too much of parapsychology today. This alternate path is more in line with the widespread cultural interest, as expressed in the Gallup poll results, and is more in line with "spiritual" reality.

Now I know that "spiritual" is controversial word for parapsychologists and for most scientists in general. Indeed, it's like waving the proverbial red flag in front of a bull for some people! But this transpersonal path recognizes the deep resistance to psi phenomena as well as the vital psychological and spiritual importance of psi, and so has important advantages.

I don't expect to change the research strategies and emphasis of particular individuals, of course, but I do hope, in discussing this alternate path, to hearten people for whom it is appealing but who feel rejected by the "parapsychological establishment." Note carefully, however, that I'm not advocating that we give up doing the best quality scientific work possible!

In many writings I have defined *essential science* and tried to discriminate it from *Materialistic Scientism*. Very briefly, in essential science, *data is always primary*. If new data doesn't fit into established theories, that's too bad for the established theories, not for the data. But mainstream science is dominated by an overarching paradigm, a philosophy of Materialistic Scientism, which says *only* what is material is real and worthwhile. From the viewpoint of Materialistic Scientism, psi is *a priori* impossible and/or, at best, nothing but a trivial anomaly, an error someplace that will eventually be explained away.

So when we do science, I want us to continue to do the best science possible, but I want us to give up the cringing, apologetic "anomaly" approach. I don't want us to implicitly buy into the putdown inherent in the word anomaly from the viewpoint of Materialistic Scientism. As Nancy Zingrone (2001) so nicely pointed out in her Presidential Address last night, we have been letting the enemy set our agenda, and taking an attitude associated by the scientific establishment with *losers*. We cannot have a healthy field if we continue to do that.

Let me make my position clear. As a parapsychologist, I do *not* study "anomalies." I study the fundamental nature of the human mind!

Parapsychology is a very difficult field to work with. Both psi phenomena themselves and the circumstances under which they manifest are very complicated. But because of that difficulty, I'm proud to work in our field! There's more challenge than in many of the easy sciences. Again, I can't stress enough, that as a parapsychologist *I do not study trivial anomalies, I study the fundamental nature of mind!*

### **Widespread Concern Among PA Members**

My concerns are not mine alone. I will publish the results more fully in some other place, but let me briefly tell you about the outcome of my email survey of the PA.

I emailed all Full and Associate Members of the PA and had a 48 percent return rate, which is very good for any kind of mail questionnaire study. My first question was "Did you enter the field of parapsychology because of, to some significant degree, what we might call "spiritual" interests or motivations, i.e., important concerns with questions of meaning, spirit, connection and the like?"

The responses to this question were my first indication of how controversial the word "spiritual" and its variations are to parapsychologists. I got lots of static: what did I really mean by the word "spiritual?" Why didn't I define it precisely? I deliberately used no specific definition, in order to cast my net widely and provoke strong responses, and it seems to have been successful!

Let me tell you a story about how controversial the word spiritual and its variations are. Back in 1975, I had an anthology I had edited in press, under the title *Spiritual Psychologies*. This was a collection of chapters by people who were authorities on various spiritual traditions, like Sufism or Yoga, for example. I had asked them to write about these various spiritual teachings as *psychologies*, however, rather than as religions or spiritual systems. This turned out to be one of my most important books, and I learned a lot from editing it, as well as stimulating others.

When *Spiritual Psychologies* was ready to be sent to the printer, I received a phone call from the editor with good news and bad news. The good news was that one of the major psychology book clubs wanted to take it for their monthly selection! The bad news was that they wanted to know if I could change the title, because psychologists simply could not deal with the word "spiritual!" So I changed the title to *Transpersonal Psychologies* (Tart, 1975), because the word transpersonal was still so new then that most psychologists had no idea what it meant, but it sounded positive and academic. I stopped waving the red flag of the word "spiritual" in front of the bull of established prejudices, and the book was well received.

Going back to the questionnaire results: Thirty-six percent replied yes to this first question. Spiritual interests, ignoring exactly how you would define "spiritual" for the moment, were a common reason for becoming a parapsychologist.

My second question was "If yes, does your current (now and last few years') work in parapsychology come primarily from that spiritual motivation?" Thirty four percent answered yes to this.

My third question was "...do you sometimes feel significant conflicts between your spiritual motivation/interests and what we might call the mainstream of laboratory, experimental research in parapsychology today?" Twenty six percent replied yes to this. So, as you can see, I'm not alone in terms of my interest in a more spiritual approach to parapsychology, or in being worried that there is a conflict with the way the field has evolved, such that this interest is frowned upon.

### **Psychological/Spiritual Resistance to Parapsychology**

Now let's look at what I think is the powerful and spiritual conflict that underlies our lack of acceptance by mainstream science.

Rather than attempt a comprehensive definition of "spiritual," which I am sure cannot be adequately defined in ordinary words or ordinary, consensus consciousness anyway (Tart, 1972; 1998), let me give an example of what I consider archetypal spiritual experience, the Cosmic Consciousness experience of

Richard Maurice Bucke, a Canadian physician who had this spontaneous experience in 1867.

It was in the early spring at the beginning of his thirty-sixth year. He and two friends had spent the evening reading Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Browning, and especially Whitman. They parted at midnight, and he had a long drive in a hansom..... His mind deeply under the influences of the ideas, images and emotions called up by the reading and talk of the evening, was calm and peaceful. He was in a state of quiet, almost passive enjoyment. All at once, without warning of any kind, he found himself wrapped around as it were by a flame colored cloud. For an instant he thought of fire, some sudden conflagration in the great city, the next he knew that the light was within himself. Directly afterwards came upon him a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness, accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination quite impossible to describe. Into his brain streamed one momentary lightning-flash of the Brahmic Splendor which has ever since lightened his life; upon his heart fell one drop of Brahmic Bliss, leaving thenceforward for always an after taste of heaven. Among other things he did not come to believe, he saw and knew that the Cosmos is not dead matter but a living Presence, that the soul of man is immortal, that the universe is so built and ordered that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all, that the foundation principle of the world is what we call love and that the happiness of every one is in the long run absolutely certain. He claims that he learned more within the few seconds during which the illumination lasted than in previous months or even years of study, and that he learned much that no study could ever have taught.... (Bucke, 1961)

That's an example of the kind of experience I mean by "spiritual."

Although Bucke's experience dates back more than 125 years ago, such experiences still happen. Those of you who are interested will be fascinated by the experience of Allan Smith, a leading, young physician and anesthesiology researcher, who had a spontaneous Cosmic Consciousness experience almost identical to Bucke's in 1976, and who gave up an academic tenure career and research track to have more time to understand the import of his experience (Smith & Tart, 1998). Smith was an atheist, had never heard of Bucke and was not interested in such subjects, yet the parallels between their experiences, more than a hundred years apart, are amazing.

Now I admit having a personal bias in favor of such a spiritual experience: I would like to have a Cosmic Consciousness experience. I would like to have such deep assurance of the goodness of the universe, *but*, as a scientist, I want to get

the best possible version of the truth, so emotional appeal *per se* is of limited value here.

What's the Materialistic Scientism view of Bucke's experience? Remember now, essential science is *always* open to data, but Materialistic Scientism is a vast, overarching paradigm (in Thomas Kuhn's sense of the word paradigm, see Kuhn, 1962) that declares that *only* what is material is real. This philosophy/paradigm has immense dominance in all areas of modern life, especially science today. Materialistic Scientism is the view held by the pseudo-skeptics who are constantly attacking parapsychology, debunking our research and, indeed, trying to keep us from doing it.

Materialistic Scientism is quite clear about Bucke's Cosmic Consciousness experience, of course: it's some kind of brain malfunction. It could not possibly be true in the sense of reflecting the actual nature of the universe. Fancier terms are used from time to time to debunk spiritual experiences, and the current new term coming into use is "neurotheology," an explaining (away) of spiritual experience by brain (mal)functioning.

For the viewpoint of Materialistic Scientism, Bucke's experience has the same truth value as if my personal computer suddenly started printing out "I have experienced union with the Big Computer in the sky and now know the depths of Binary Electroecstasy!" You would call the repairman if your computer did that, and the followers of Materialistic Scientism think that Bucke needs the repairman too.

The world view of Materialistic Scientism was expressed clearly and succinctly by Bertrand Russell in 1923:

"That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought or feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system; and the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy that rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built." (Russell, 1923, pp 6-7)

This is very blunt, but reflects Materialistic Scientism quite well. I suggest the reader take a moment to reflect on how this credo makes you feel, quite aside from intellectual reflections on what truth value it does or does not have.

One might react that physics was very different in the early part of the 20th century, much more primitive, and that we now have quantum physics. While it's true that quantum physics makes the universe much more puzzling and interesting than simple Newtonian physics, most of quantum physics is still reductionistic and basically materialistic in its view.

While a number of parapsychologists think that quantum physics may have a lot to do with psi, and I'm very pleased that such bright people are thinking that way, I must still note that I have a rather old-fashioned view that when one's science is well developed, you can *predict* and *control* the phenomena you study. Yet parapsychologists who work from a quantum physics point of view have not produced higher levels of psi or reliability of effects or prediction than parapsychologists who have no understanding of quantum physics, so while quantum physics *might* offer promise, there's little indication of any real results yet.

The main point I've been making here is that there is, for most human beings, an immense, potential *spiritual* and *transpersonal* significance to psi phenomena that appeals deeply to the human spirit. Materialistic Scientism, the dominant paradigm in science, on the other hand, while it has led to a lot of progress in the material realm, has a view that crushes the human spirit. And, from a scientific perspective, a view that does not adequately recognize and account for the actual data about psi.

Again, I must emphasize that I'm not advocating that we don't do the best kind of *essential* science possible when we do science, but we have to recognize that good science alone will almost certainly not be sufficient to gain acceptance of our field and data from mainstream science, or for real progress in our field, when there are such emotionally charged, largely hidden conflicts between a spiritual versus a materialistic approach to life inherent in the territory of psi research. Carrying on as if these conflicts were not there, or will be conveniently swept aside by data and rational thinking alone, is not going to work.

### **Parapsychology and Transpersonal Psychology**

I've struggled with this conflict in our field for the 50 years that I've been interested, and my personal resolution at this point is to find that I'm proud to be *both* a spiritual seeker and a scientist, and to practice each approach as well as I can - although I'm sure I do the scientist part much better than the spiritual seeker part. That is, I am deeply interested in the kind of matters we call spiritual, investing considerable amounts of my personal time in it. I'm also deeply devoted to my scientific work on and interest in the subject matter, and I try to find ways to integrate the two when possible.

So I define myself publicly as both a spiritual seeker and a scientist. But isn't such a personal strategy risky for many parapsychologists? We are already defined as marginal if not pseudo-scientists, and our data are dismissed as trivial anomalies: wouldn't admitting to spiritual interests just increase the prejudice against us? Perhaps it's personally easier for me to be honest about my interests because I held a tenured position and am now semi-retired?

One of the ways I make it easier for myself to hold both positions, which may be a useful strategy for some of the rest of us, is to make my primary definition of myself as a professional be that I am a *transpersonal psychologist*, rather than a *parapsychologist*. Within transpersonal psychology, parapsychology is a narrower, technical interest of mine. Thus, while true to my scientific responsibilities, I can be true to my own and others' deep personal interests in spiritual matters, and I can take a variety of positions - philosophical, psychological, humanistic, Buddhist, Sufi, etc. - with respect to a variety of aspects and studies on psi and transpersonal phenomena, instead of being limited to an ultra-scientific, laboratory-research-only position.

Since I've gotten static for not "defining" the spiritual, I had better at least define the transpersonal. What is transpersonal psychology? Here's a definition of the field, which I helped to compose, from the catalog of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology:

"Transpersonal psychology is ..... based on people's experiences of temporarily transcending our usual identification with our limited biological, historical, cultural and personal self and, at the deepest and most profound levels of experience possible, recognizing/being "something" of vast intelligence and compassion that encompasses/is the entire universe. From this perspective our ordinary, "normal" biological, historical, cultural and personal self is seen as an important, but quite partial (and often pathologically distorted) manifestation or expression of this much greater "something" that is our deeper origin and destination."

Notice that the emphasis in this definition is on *experiences*. People's experiences are taken as primary data for the field, rather than dismissed as merely "subjective," as the behavioristic emphasis in psychology did, or as Materialistic Scientism does. But, you might object, aren't such experiences mere delusions? Marx talked about religion as the opiate of the masses. Since we are dealing mainly with the white middle-class as the people currently most interested in transpersonal psychology, are we talking about merely the "hallucinogens of the elite," to coin a phrase? That's certainly the way Materialistic Scientism would tend to dismiss transpersonal psychology.

By way of answering, let me introduce an analogy years that I've used for many years: parapsychology is to transpersonal psychology as physics is to engineering.

Parapsychology	= physics	= basic nature of reality
Transpersonal Psychology	= engineering	= applications

That is parapsychology, like physics, studies the basic nature of reality, while transpersonal psychology and engineering are concerned with practical applications of that reality<sup>1</sup>.

*Transpersonal psychology needs parapsychology* to discover the fundamental nature of the mind, which both opens up and sets limits on the possibilities of what can be done with practical applications. Parapsychology also helps discover aspects of mind which might not be at all obvious with only an interest in practical applications or spontaneous psychic and transpersonal experiences. For example, laboratory psi research discovered the phenomena of *psi missing*, which I doubt would ever have been discovered if we simply studied the spontaneous experiences that happen to people in everyday life. Might there be phenomena comparable to psi missing in transpersonal psychology?

In general, parapsychology shows that the mind can do certain kinds of things which cannot be satisfactorily explained by a Materialistic Scientific view, and which resemble the phenomena we call "spiritual." That is, parapsychological findings strongly lend a *reality* to the transpersonal, and legitimize (at least some of) the applications of transpersonal psychology, something we will look at in more detail below.

*Parapsychology needs transpersonal psychology* to keep it from foundering in technical sterility. Psi phenomena happen to real people in real life: they're not a laboratory curiosity! They have often happened for meaningful psychological and spiritual reasons. Our data in parapsychology speaks to people's deepest hopes and fears: they are not just a scientific "anomaly."

### **Parapsychology and the Conflicting World Views**

Let me give you some specifics on the relevance of parapsychology to the conflicting world views of the spiritual and Materialistic Scientism orientations. This will be rather brief in general because of time limitations, but indicates directions in which development can take place.

#### **Nature of Reality:**

First let's look at the nature of reality. In the spiritual/transpersonal view, reality is inherently *alive*. To quote from Bucke, "...that the cosmos is not dead matter

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<sup>1</sup> The analogy is imperfect of course, as transpersonal psychology has an extensive theoretical side of its own, but it will do for our purposes here.

but living Presence...." The Materialistic Scientism view, on the other hand, sees matter is basically dead. The universe consists of dead matter, moved about by mindless energies, and the mind equals nothing but the brain. Quite a contrast.

In my estimation, the most important finding of parapsychology is the vast amount of data we have that shows that the *mind* is capable of sensing and doing things in the material world when all known sensory and motor mechanisms are blocked. These observable aspects of psi require us to espouse a *pragmatic dualism* and not simply assume, as Materialistic Scientism does, that the mind equals nothing but the brain. The mind is a pragmatically real "thing," an entity or process that *we must study on its own terms*. We simply can't wait for the brain scientist to explain the mind (away). Psi shows us that one mind can reach out to another, as in telepathy, that mind can reach out to this material world of supposedly "dead" matter, as clairvoyance and psychokinesis, and that mind can occasionally reach out to even the simplest life forms, as in healing studies with bacteria, as well as more complex life forms.

### **Connection, Morality, Relationship:**

The second specific: let's look at the matter of *connection* or *morality* or *relationship*. The spiritual/transpersonal view is that some kind of intimate connection, and a corresponding morality, is fundamental. To quote from Bucke again, "...that the foundation principal the world is what we call love..." Materialistic Scientism, on the other hand, has a view of fundamental isolation of each of our individual consciousnesses. *My* consciousness is generated by the physical workings of *my* brain, *your* consciousness is generated by the physical workings of *your* brain. *My* brain is inside a box of bone, *my* skull, *yours* is inside *your* skull. We can have *indirect* communication with each other by means of physical energies modulated by our motor behavior and detected by our senses, but it's only indirect. We only infer things about each other's mental processes from these sensory cues, we have no direct knowledge of each other's minds. Each of us is ultimately isolated. It rather easily follows from this that selfishness, "looking out for Number One" as the 80's phrase goes, is a sensible philosophy.

Psi phenomena demonstrate that this apparent isolation is not that real, for we can have at least intermittent connections beyond any known physical connections, connections that seem much more direct. Telepathic experiences, for example. Thus John Donne's famous and appealing saying, "No man is an island," is seen as an unrealistic abstraction, or statement about indirect social relationships from the viewpoint of Materialistic Scientism, but psi is the data that suggests that this spiritual view of vital connection may have a deep reality: in some fundamental sense, we really are all connected.

Thus the Cosmic Consciousness experience or any kind of mystical experience that involves feeling at one with the universe or other life (now often called a Unity Experience), might sometimes be a matter of a malfunctioning of the brain

circuits that define our ordinary self-other boundaries, but Cosmic Consciousness or the Unity Experience may also be a fundamental insight into or connection with reality: we really are intimately part of all life, all the universe. That raises an interesting possibility for research. Transpersonal psychology tries to develop techniques which can induce various mystical experiences: if a Unity Experience were induced, and clairvoyance tests given, might there be an immediate manifestation of truly greater connections with higher clairvoyance scores?

Note there are practical moral relationship implications of psi data also. If we are indeed united, one, then if I am hurting you, there is some profound sense of which I am hurting myself - which is a stupid thing to do. Instead of morality toward one another merely being a matter of shoulds, it becomes a matter of intelligence self-interest. *Your* pain, *your* suffering, is no longer merely a isolated neurochemical reaction taking place in another brain and body that isn't me, it's *my* pain, *my* suffering, something of fundamental concern to me!

And perhaps our resistance to dealing with this level of relationship is one of the fundamental reasons that psi appears rarely in ordinary life? Or that pseudo-skeptics show such illogical but highly passionate hostility to parapsychology?

This implication of psi strongly challenges the dominance of scientific materialism and so our field will probably continue to meet with a lot of irrational resistance. Furthermore, as Robert McConnell (2001) has pointed out, scientific materialism supports the widespread exploitation of people by others for their own profit. After all, what do the mere, isolated biochemical reactions (of suffering) in *others'* brains matter to *me* if my own biochemical reactions are more pleasant because of all the profit I make?

### **Meaning:**

A third specific: is there meaning in the universe? Certainly there is in the spiritual/transpersonal view. As Bucke put it, "...all things work together for the good of each and all." But there is no inherent meaning in the scientific/materialistic view. To quote Russell, "...that man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcomes of accidental collocations of atoms..."

Isn't it interesting that a lot of psi data can be interpreted to show that *meaning* produces results, but *mechanism* doesn't? When an agent is asked to psychokinetically affect the output of an electronic random number generator, for example, to make more of one color light come on more than another, in almost all cases the agent has no understanding whatsoever of the mechanics of the electronic circuits controlling the outcome - but nevertheless produces a shift toward the *meaningful* outcome of complying with the experimenter's request. Even with the old dice studies, where you might imagine a mechanical explanation of the agent psychokinetically exerting a push on a falling die at just

the right moment to make it come up with the desired face, if you really think about this, the linear and angular momentum and trajectory information needed to be obtained by the senses and/or clairvoyance, the precise timing of the PK push, the precise angle and exact force to push with, make the PK dice results clearly beyond what a human brain can process in the allotted time. Again, the meaningfulness of complying with the experimenter's request produces results. So we have data that suggest that meaning may be a fundamental factor in the universe, rather than a desperate, purely subjective phenomena produced by electrochemical processes and brains.

### **Love:**

A fourth specific: the nature of love. In the spiritual/transpersonal view, love is a fundamental factor the universe. "... that the foundation principal of the world is what we call love..." For the scientific/materialistic view, love is a psychological phenomena based upon biochemical actions, a kind of sublimated biological lust, or perhaps the mere chemical reactions leading to behavioral reactions that maximize the effects of "selfish genes" trying to propagate themselves.

I've also been impressed by William Braud's analysis, in his chapter in my *Body Mind Spirit* book (Tart, 1997) that three general factors that facilitate psi performance are faith, hope, and love: factors which are central virtues in all religions.

I must add, parenthetically, that my *Body Mind Spirit: Exploring the Parapsychology of Spirituality* anthology (Tart, 1997) may well be my most important work in parapsychology, but while it has received good reviews, it's not at all clear that it's having any effect on the field. For those of you don't know it, it's an anthology in which I got a number of our colleagues to come out from behind the laboratory bench and talk about the spiritual *implications* of psi data, rather than hiding behind sterile statements about "anomalies."

### **Death:**

A fifth specific: the nature of death. The spiritual/transpersonal view sees death as some kind of transition, not as a final end. "...that the soul of man is immortal..." The scientific/materialistic view on the other hand, sees death as the ultimate end. Russell put it succinctly (and depressingly), "...that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought or feeling, can preserve a life beyond the grave..." With consciousness being nothing but a neurochemical reaction within the brain and nervous system, obviously when that system breaks down, there's no further consciousness.

Parapsychology, on the other hand, has a large body of evidence strongly suggestive of some kind of post-mortem survival and/or possible reincarnation. But, to put it more accurately, I should say that *psychical research* has the evidence, for the survival question is being almost totally ignored in

contemporary parapsychology. This is an example the kind of phenomena in question 3 of my email questionnaire, where there's become something of a mainstream consensus in contemporary parapsychology that excludes spiritual interests, interests in the survival question, and the like. As one empirical observation, probably the most active survival researcher in the United States at the present time is Professor Gary Schwartz at the University of Arizona, but he isn't a member of the PA. How odd, or how sad?

### **Some Aspects of A Different Path**

How might parapsychology be done differently?

Again I want to stress that I'm not advocating that we lower our essential scientific standards in any way! When we do science, we should do it impeccably, and be proud that we do it to such high standards. But, and this is the difference I want to advocate, we don't have to limit our *interpretation* of psi data, our theorizing, to Materialistic Scientism. Remember, limiting our interpretations this way has not worked for gaining acceptance with mainstream science, and interpreting our data in this broader, transpersonal framework fits our data in a much more interesting fashion.

So how could parapsychology, as a field, become more spiritually/transpersonally relevant? I'll make just a few brief suggestions, few partly because my time is running out, partly because I'm semi-retired and not likely to do much more active investigation myself, so my younger colleagues need to work out the practical details of these suggestions.

One area that we could give much more emphasis to in parapsychology is the effect of prayer and psychic healing on illness. We now have enough data to establish the something real is happening here, but the data could be considerably refined. For example, what kinds of prayer or healing techniques have the strongest effects? How do various kinds of prayers or healing techniques interact with, say, the belief system of the practitioner or the recipient, or the practitioner's or recipient's personality?

We might expect considerable resistance to expanded research here, though. Resistance from Materialistic Scientism, of course, because of investments (intellectual, emotional and economic) in purely materialistic medicine as well as to resistance to the spiritual implications of parapsychology generally. Resistance from, I'm sad to say, some of our own parapsychologist colleagues who fear that this kind of research would offend mainstream scientism even more and make acceptance of parapsychology even harder. And resistance from dogmatic religions of all sorts. Suppose we found that the prayers of some religious followers weren't particularly effective? Or that, say, the prayers of Presbyterians were more effective in promoting healing than the prayers of Baptists? Wouldn't that lead to interesting reactions?

In the way we generally think of psychic healing, we can fit the phenomena pretty much into a conventional model that an individual person is performing an action that, through some kind of psi intervention, produces the healing effect. But for fully studying the effects of prayer, there is the fact that the prayer is not addressed to the prayer's own ego (or subconscious), but to God or various gods or spiritual forces/entities. Is successful psychic healing just from the ego? Or is the God or gods prayed to a real factor? How would we tell? Are we ready to think about this kind of question yet?

Parapsychology could be of great service to transpersonal psychology in asking questions about what parts of transpersonal psychology work, and, perhaps how they work. For example, when I get a new class of graduate students at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, after welcoming them to the Institute I mention that 50 percent of what we're going to teach them in the next few years is really valuable and vital truth - and 50 percent of it is nonsense. And, unfortunately, we, the faculty, don't know which 50 percent is the vital truth and which 50 percent is the nonsense!

The students do not like to hear this! But I tell them for two purposes. First is to remind them that they have to continue to use their own discriminating intelligence and not just blithely accept what the faculty teaches. Second, just as importantly, I'm trying to inspire them for their dissertation research, because they will have an opportunity to help the field continue discriminating what is the vital truth and what is the irrelevance and nonsense, and so aid progress for the entire field.

Parapsychologists could contribute a lot here. For example, as briefly mentioned earlier, if some kind of mystical Unity Experience does involve a real connection to the rest of the universe, we would expect better psi connections for both telepathy, clairvoyance, and perhaps psychokinesis or psychic healing. Could we devise a parapsychology test of any of these functions that would make sense for someone having a Unity Experience to do during the experience? Could we start discriminating different kinds of Unity Experiences with this test, some of which involve merely a feeling of unity with the universe but others of which involve genuine unity?

I'm not saying, of course, that the only value of a mystical Unity Experience is increased psi abilities. There are numerous, valuable consequences of the experience that have nothing to do with possible psi abilities. But the increased discrimination of possible types of experience, based on psi functioning, would be quite interesting and of potential practical value.

Another thing our field could do differently would be to get much more involved in near death experience (NDE) research. NDEs have very important effects on people's religious and spiritual thinking, on the practical ways they lead their lives, and have become the basis of an important social movement in

contemporary life. Yet NDE research has been almost totally separate from the field of parapsychology. In some ways this is been very freeing: it's pretty hard to squeeze NDEs into a laboratory format, and we might have an inhibiting effect on the field. On the other hand, I've seen many studies in the NDE literature that could be done in a much more powerful and sophisticated way with advice from parapsychologists.

We should also think about survival research. The question of postmortem survival was a major foundation of a psychical research, but when psychical researchers ran up against the alternative hypothesis of superpsi and unconscious personation, they tended to throw up their hands and give up research because of not being able to figure out how to *conclusively* decide between the superpsi interpretation and a postmortem survival interpretation. But that happened 50 years ago: could it really be the case that we have made so little advance in our psychological and methodological sophistication that we couldn't reopen the survival research question and, even if not getting absolutely final answers, get much more powerful and sophisticated answers? Not to mention that the issues of survival research, if we did well, would enormously appeal to the public, even if not to mainstream scientism.

### **Conclusions: Spirit to Manifest!**

I don't have all the answers to the problems with our field, but I hope that these remarks will help to inspire others to examine these problems and create fruitful directions that we can move in. Again, I don't expect to change anyone's preferred style of research, but I do hope to reinforce and legitimate pursuit of the transpersonal aspects, the transpersonal/spiritual implications of psi phenomena. I would like to, as it were, reincarnate the spirit of psychical research in parapsychology, and I would like to give heart to those who have these interests and motivations: you are not alone.

I titled this talk "Parapsychology And Transpersonal Psychology: 'Anomalies' to be Explained Away or Spirit to Manifest?" I think you know my answer to this question: spirit is vital to being a human being, vital to our culture, and vital to the future of the field of parapsychology. As I stated before, I'm proud to be *both* a scientist and a spiritual seeker. And I don't study trivial anomalies, I study the basic nature of the human mind. I'm a winner, not a loser!

Will you join me in standing up for this view? In researching and publicizing the vital, spiritual, transpersonal importance of what we're doing?

Thank you.

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