

## Honoring Our Natural Experiences

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We know a thing only by uniting with it; by assimilating it; by an interpenetration of it and ourselves....Wisdom is the fruit of communion; ignorance the inevitable portion of those who 'keep themselves to themselves,' and stand apart, judging, analyzing the things which they have never truly known. (p. 4)

Those are the words of Evelyn Underhill, written in 1915. She was, of course, discussing the mystical experience, a passion to which she devoted much of her life. I am convinced that these words apply equally well to parapsychological investigations. We shall never know psychic and other exceptional human experiences fully by distancing ourselves from them in the service of an objective, experimental, quantitative, laboratory approach. To know, to fully understand them, we must welcome them into our lives, must commune with them, assimilate them. We must dance and play with these experiences in their own territories, speak with them using their own languages. As psi investigators, we have much to gain from recognizing, owning, and honoring our own psi experiences.

In parapsychology, laboratory experimentation certainly has its place; but this is one place among many. Field work and the study of the spontaneous experiences of others also

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have their places. But these are only two additional places among many. Approaching psi from the outside will provide glimpses of the picture. Experiencing psi from within, through entering the landscape itself, will expand and deepen our understanding.

#### PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Lest my position be misunderstood, I should make several things explicit. I feel that, for certain purposes, an experimental approach to psi can be exceedingly worthwhile. I love laboratory work, have done much of it, am still doing it (as witnessed by two experimental reports I am presenting at this conference), and am still quite excited about particular laboratory projects that I hope to carry out in the future. I certainly do not advocate abandoning such an approach. I do feel, however, that this approach is limited, that its virtues have been overemphasized, and that it has been excessively privileged over other complementary approaches. To the extent that this is so, our field has become unbalanced. The pendulum has swung too far in one direction, and a correction would seem to be in order. The purpose of this paper is to remind us of some of the neglected regions of the continuum upon which all methodologies reside. In doing this, I am knowingly emphasizing the virtues of the neglected approaches and deliberately portraying them in bold relief in order to make certain points. I trust that the reader will realize that I have not forgotten the many unmentioned positive aspects of the experimental approach.

#### RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

We all have been well schooled in what I shall call, for convenience, the "conventional paradigm," and so there is little need to characterize it in detail. According to its view, reality is single, tangible, and fragmentable. The knower and the known are separable. There are causes and there are effects, which are also separate or separable; causes always precede

or are simultaneous with their effects. There is a search for general laws or principles that apply to all instances, in all contexts, and at all times. The primary aim is to explain, predict, and control. The premier method is that of the controlled and manipulative experiment. The primary measures are quantitative. It is this paradigm that continues to dominate our institutions of higher learning, the publication policies of our mainstream scientific journals, and our own thoughts and practices.

Yet there is a growing trend in science in general, but especially in the human sciences, toward recognizing the limitations of this conventional paradigm. Its validity, usefulness, and even its metaphysical assumptions are increasingly being called into question. There is a growing shift away from this paradigm toward an alternative "new paradigm." According to this alternative view, reality is multiple, constructed, and holistic. The knower and the known are inseparable and constantly interacting. Since events are ever involved in a mutually interacting and interconnected process, it is not especially useful to speak of causes and effects. If causal notions are entertained, ideas of emergence, downward causation (Sperry, 1981, 1983), and nonlocal interactions are introduced as well. There is more emphasis on the individual case and on specific contexts. An important aim, complementary to explaining, predicting, and controlling is understanding. Understanding has to do with a complete description, a complete experiencing, and an appreciation of meaning. It has more to do with individuals and their unique histories than it does with formal properties. It is less "nomothetic" and more "idiographic" in its emphasis. Here, the premier method is observation under naturalistic conditions. The primary measures are qualitative. The new paradigm, more than the conventional paradigm, recognizes the complexity, richness, pluralism, and multiplicity of the world, and is much more hospitable to human experiences. It is somewhat strange to call this a "new" paradigm when many of its features were discussed millennia ago by various sages, mystics, and philosophers. It

might be better to consider this a return to or remembering of an earlier way of understanding the world.

The new paradigm emphasizes the importance of gathering information in natural settings, rather than in the more artificial and limiting conditions of a laboratory experiment. It recognizes the human person as the data-gathering instrument *par excellence*. It recognizes the importance of tacit or personal knowledge. It is more important that sampling be purposive than random. It insists that its theories emerge from or be grounded in the data rather than be generated *a priori*. It prefers to listen to the data, to let the phenomena studied speak in their own voices, rather than impose some prior structure upon the research or upon the research participants. It lets its designs emerge and grow through confronting the data, rather than insist that designs be completely finalized in advance. Thus, it welcomes surprises and discoveries.

As methods of disciplined inquiry, the investigative procedures of the new paradigm are just as alert to the possibility of error, excessive subjectivism, and delusion as are those of the conventional paradigm. To guard against error, the conventional paradigms have developed safeguards to assure internal and external validity, generalizability, and reliability. The methods of the new paradigm have analogous concerns and analogous safeguards in the form of techniques for establishing "trustworthiness" which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition to such methodological safeguards, the new paradigm also includes the consideration of values and of provisions for increased awareness and social action on the part of all research participants, and it is thus a more complete and more responsible enterprise than is the case for the conventional approaches to research. The latter claim to be value-independent and are unconcerned with the consequences of the research.

For those interested in exploring the differences between the conventional and the

new paradigms, I recommend Polkinghorne's (1983) treatise on methodology for the human sciences, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) extended discussions of positivist and naturalist paradigms, Guba's (1990) collection of postpositivism, critical theory, and constructivism offerings, Harman's (1991) discussions of the metaphysical presuppositions of separateness science and wholeness science, and Josephson and Rubik's (1992) summary of "extended science." Also of great relevance are reports of three recent international symposia on science and consciousness held in Athens and Olympia, Greece (1990, 1992, 1993).

Within the new paradigm is a special appreciation of the importance of understanding individual experiences in their natural context and of understanding the meaning of these experiences to the experiencer. There is also a more egalitarian relationship between investigator and other research participants and a realization that it is the research participants themselves who are the experts and that they should be listened to carefully and respectfully. In some of the new paradigm methods, the findings are discussed thoroughly with the participants in order to determine whether they accurately and completely reflect the participants' experiences; if not, the findings are suitably expanded and revised. All of these emphases are especially prominent in phenomenological (Valle & Halling, 1989) and heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990) approaches. They are also present, to various degrees, in ethnographic, case study, and textual reading and hermeneutic approaches.

I suggest that we expand and complement our methods of inquiry within parapsychology by including additional methodologies. In a recent review of approaches to the study of spontaneous psi experiences, Rhea White (1992) described 12 methods that could be usefully applied. The suggested methods include: the individual case approach, case collections, surveys, the cross-cultural approach, the longitudinal approach, the clinical approach, the psychological approach, the archetypal approach, the folklorist approach, the active imagination approach, the social constructionist approach, and the experience-

centered approach. She argues that the most promising of these are the ones that have been employed least often. In my own research courses, I teach 15 general types of research methods. These research methodologies include: field studies (participant observation, naturalistic observation, and ethnography), interview/questionnaire/survey methods, phenomenological methods, heuristic research (Moustakas), case study/life history, single subject designs, feminist approaches, theoretical methods, historical methods, textual readings (conversational analysis, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, content analysis, and hermeneutics), experimental designs, quasi-experimental designs, causal-comparative studies, the correlational approach (including multivariate methods), and action research. Experimental methods, field observations, and case studies, which comprise the bulk of present parapsychological investigations, are but three of those methods; the other twelve methods could profitably be included more frequently in our parapsychological research enterprise.

Twelve years ago, Hoyt Edge (1982) alerted us to the fact that "there are new winds blowing in normal science toward new experimental methodology" and that "we ought to enjoy the breezes and learn from them" (p. 43). Today, those winds have grown stronger in "normal science." The impact of the new paradigm and the use of alternative methodologies are being felt especially strongly in anthropology, sociology, education, nursing, feminist studies, and in humanistic and transpersonal psychology. The mainstream, however, continues to cling to an outmoded methodology and to an increasingly questionable ontology and epistemology. And, with some notable exceptions, parapsychologists follow the mainstream rather than lead the way in their approaches, methods, findings, concepts, and understandings. An experience-centered approach to psi research can serve as a useful antidote to this trend, one that holds special promise for revealing important information about psi's nature, workings, and meanings.

## CLINICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The foregoing suggests that an experience-centered approach is becoming increasingly respectable and may well be a harbinger of future paradigmatic methodologies. But there are other considerations that favor an experience-centered approach. There is undeniable evidence that recognizing, owning, honoring, and sharing one's experiences, especially one's more unusual experiences, is beneficial to one's physical health and psychological well-being. Although all counseling and psychotherapeutic traditions are based upon this truism, I call to your attention three specific sets of findings.

James Pennebaker is a psychologist who has been studying the psychological and physiological correlates of confession, self-disclosure, and confiding of significant experiences. He has found that even relatively brief disclosures of personal and traumatic experiences (especially those that have been kept secret from all others) are associated with improvements in health and well-being as measured by various psychophysiological indices, symptoms, physician visits, and immunological reactions (Pennebaker, Hughes, & O'Heeron, 1987; Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser, & Glaser, 1988; Pennebaker & Susman, 1988). Although processes of catharsis, extinction, and disinhibition are undoubtedly involved in Pennebacker's findings, perhaps the most important health-facilitating aspect of disclosure is that the process allows reconceptualizations or cognitive changes as the experiences are shared and explored from new and different points of view.

Ian Wickramasekera (1989) is a behavioral medicine practitioner who has found that the majority of his patients who present somatic complaints are either very high or very low on hypnotic susceptibility. Those who are highly hypnotically susceptible tend to report parapsychological and other unusual experiences. As the patients discuss these experiences and assimilate them more thoroughly into their lives, they experience remission of their

somatic symptoms.

In this symposium, we heard Rhea White speak of Tom Driver's (1991) views on the important and transformational concomitants of confessional performance and self-revelation (White, 1993a; see also a paper she devoted to Driver's book: White, 1993b). She discussed the relevance of his ideas to exceptional human experiences, including psi, and indicated that through acknowledging and confessing our own experiences, we may grow in understanding them. Not only that, but disclosure may somehow increase the very reality of our experiences to ourselves, to others, and perhaps to the physical world as well.

For these and for many other reasons, it may be important to the well-being of ourselves and of our discipline, to our increased understanding of our subject matter, and to, perhaps, the increased reality of what we are studying, that we, as investigators, acknowledge publicly our own personal psi experiences.

#### PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS

I have had many psychic and other exceptional human experiences. I am convinced that I have learned at least as much from those personal experiences as I have learned from formal laboratory investigations. Controlled laboratory experiments are excellent for demonstrating the existence of psi effects under conditions that preclude artifacts, confounds, or delusions. They are also helpful to those who have no or few psi experiences of their own. But beyond that, I feel their usefulness is quite limited, and that we shall learn little more from them than can be learned equally well or better through an appreciation of, and thoughtful reflection upon, our own personal psi experiences as they unfold in our everyday lives. Our experiences are rich in content and meaning, occur in unique and complex circumstances, and may be relevant to real and important needs; they are, in the words of Jan Ehrenwald, "need-determined" (Ehrenwald, 1984). Our laboratories, on the other hand, provide conditions that are relatively impoverished, limited, artificial, and



trivializing; the psi that may emerge there is more likely to be "flaw-determined" (Ehrenwald, 1984). We do not set the stage realistically in our experiments, and, in an attempt to make conditions as immaculate and well-controlled as possible, we deprive psi of its usual tools (the ambient raw materials that it may mould or transform in new informative or energetic ways; these tools would include ordinary sensory functioning). Additionally, our very mental condition of being alert, logical, analytical, and interpretive may actually decrease the likelihood of psi experiences in ourselves or in those who participate in our experiments. We may learn some things about psi using such designs, especially, perhaps, about how it might interact with physical and physiological variables. However, to gain an adequate and valid understanding of psi's interaction with psychological, social, and cultural variables, it would seem more appropriate to study psi naturalistically and experientially, as it occurs in everyday life. Perhaps the best way to do this would be to investigate our own experiences in order to learn more about their nature, the circumstances under which they do or do not occur, the patterns they form, and the meanings and lessons they may provide.

I feel the foregoing comments apply not only to psi experimentation, but also to much research in the areas of cognitive, personality, and social psychology. In these three areas, as well as in psi experimentation, meaningful factors are often artificialized and trivialized in attempts to objectify and operationalize them. Additionally, various types of experimenter effects (psi-mediated and more conventional) may render conclusions that are questionable, ambiguous, or invalid.

Of course, "flaw-determined" psi may occur in everyday life just as it does in the laboratory, under special conditions in which our usual filtering processes are reduced. This may account for instances in which our psi functioning takes a seemingly "trivial" form. It is also true that powerful needs or incentives can be, and occasionally have been, created in parapsychological experiments; therefore, "need-determined" psi certainly can occur within

the confines of the experimental laboratory.

### SOME PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

From the numerous psi experiences I have had, I will describe only a few in order to present a flavor of the contexts in which they occurred and to indicate what I have learned from them. Many of my psi experiences have occurred in the laboratory. This is because, in the course of doing full time parapsychological research for 17 years, the laboratory became part of my everyday life. I shall restrict my comments, however, to some relatively undramatic events that occurred outside of the laboratory.

When I first taught a full-credit, undergraduate course in parapsychology, I would experience, for a period of about two weeks each, the various forms of psi that I was teaching. For example, the very first time I uttered the word "poltergeist" in the classroom, the large cover of the light fixture above my head spontaneously became unattached, causing the cover to fall and dangle above me. To this day, the students think I set that up as a demonstration; I did not.

In that same course, when our topic was precognition, I had a series of precognitive dreams. Nearly every morning for a period of about two weeks, my last dream of the early morning would be relevant to something I would hear on the radio about 20 minutes after awakening (note: this was *not* a clock radio). An example: I dreamt I was on a tall mountain in Japan; I swept my index finger through the air and when I looked at my finger, I found it was covered with black soot. Twenty minutes later, the radio broadcast news of unusually severe air pollution in Tokyo. Another example: I dreamt of a monkey or ape that was a trapeze catcher in an aerial act. Twenty minutes later, on the radio, there was a morning comedy routine in which one character was describing his cousin who was outside the door. The cousin was described as being short, hairy all over, with long arms that dangled down to the ground, apelike; the cousin's occupation was a trapeze catcher in an aerial act.

I had similar experiences surrounding other forms of psi that I was teaching. My own interpretation of these is that I was somehow calling upon or creating such experiences in order to know them more completely, at various levels, so that I might be able to teach them better. I knew, at an intellectual level, that such experiences existed from my readings in the professional literature and from what I was learning at parapsychology conventions. I think the experiences themselves were necessary, however, for me to more thoroughly understand what such experiences were about, especially at an emotional level. They tended to continue for brief periods of time; when they had supplied the necessary lessons, they disappeared.

Many years later, an example of a psi-mediated instrumental response: I was about to leave on an automotive exploration of Baja California. I had just shaved my beard and thought I looked somewhat strange without it. I was going out of my way to avoid seeing people who knew me, since I did not want them to see me beardless. I needed a map of Baja, for I did not have one, but knew it would be helpful once I got there. On my way out of town, I decided to have one last meal at a restaurant I rarely frequented. Just as I was about to leave, in came a friend. When I mentioned that I was on my way to Baja, he told me he just happened to have a map of Baja in his back pocket. He gave me the map, which did indeed turn out to be useful in my later adventures. A need was satisfied through an "accidental" encounter.

Some years later, an example of spontaneous macro-PK: Early one morning I discovered that some equipment necessary for an experimental session that morning was malfunctioning. I attempted, in vain, to repair the apparatus for a period of about 45 minutes. I was frustrated and angry that the equipment was not working and that the participant would soon be arriving for the session; in other words, I was in a poltergeisty mood. Now at that time, there was working with us a secretary who was not doing a very

good job and whom I should have fired. I had not done that, and this was a continual irritant of unfinished business. Just about then, the secretary came in, walked by my office door and bade me good morning; this was a very innocuous comment, but one that brought her and my unfinished business to mind. After she had gone to her desk, I reached for two closed books of safety matches that were on my desk, one atop the other. I reached for the top one and put it in my pocket. I reached for the second one, and when my fingers were about one inch away from them, the matches burst into flame. There were no heat sources nearby, and safety matches are not supposed to behave that way. In order for such matches to ignite, it is necessary for the materials on a match and on a striker to come together. The matchbook was tightly closed and there is no conventional way that I know of for the matches to spontaneously ignite. Some days later, I told an abbreviated version of this story to a visiting psychologist, leaving out the part about the secretary. As soon as he heard the story, he immediately asked me, "You weren't thinking of *firing* anyone, were you?" Only then did I see the connection between the two events. My interpretation is that the part of me that knows how to do such things (Carl Jung would suggest that this might be happening at the *psychoid level* where, according to his system, mind meets matter and the two can scarcely be distinguished) translated an idea of personnel firing into a manifestation of physical fire, perhaps to get my attention and drive home a point in a dramatic fashion. This has become my favorite example of psi's dramatizing function. If this extreme form of dramatization can occur, less extreme forms of possible psi dramatization (such as aura-seeing, energy experiences, apparitions, *even commonplace psi-mediated imagery*) seem much more feasible.

In 1969, I arranged for my very first Ganzfeld self-experimenting session on the floor of the living room of my apartment in Houston, Texas. Of a number of interesting events occurring in that first session, one was a very intense and vivid vision of a motorcycle, bright

headlights, and wet streets. Shortly after the session, when my wife returned home, she reported that at the time of my Ganzfeld vision, she had avoided a near collision with a motorcycle while driving home; rain-wet streets and bright headlights also featured in the actual event. This is, of course, a prototypical "crisis telepathy" (or better, perhaps, "crisis ESP") experience involving a loved one, optimized, perhaps, by the Ganzfeld condition I was experiencing at the time.

I'll mention just one more specific example. At the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, where I now teach, it is customary to begin each class with a "transpersonal opening." Such openings usually consist of meditations or guided imagery exercises. I began the last Research Methods class of the Winter quarter with a moment of silence that we used to center ourselves and connect with one another. Normally, we all close our eyes and participate fully in these openings. On this particular occasion, with my eyes closed, I mentally went around the room, imaging the face of each student in turn and establishing contact with that student. When I had mentally gone around the room, I realized that I had skipped over one particular student, that she had been absent from my imagery. I opened my eyes briefly to peek at my watch and noticed that that particular student was sitting with eyes wide open, participating not at all in the exercise. (The reason for her nonparticipation, which I learned after class, is itself quite interesting but time does not permit describing this here.) My interpretation of this event is that I learned of the student's nonparticipation quite directly through a telepathic interaction, and I dramatized that knowledge to myself by omitting her face from my imagery as I mentally scanned the room with eyes closed. I present this to indicate that psi may help us become aware of meaningful *disconnections* in our "long body" (to use Bill Roll's term for our nonlocal interconnections) and of situations that are psychologically threatening

To speak more generally, through the years I have experienced countless meaningful

coincidences or synchronicities. Sometimes such coincidences seem trivial. Often, however, they seem to be indications of things to pay attention to, or they seem to be affirmations or confirmations of what I am undertaking. Sometimes synchronicities remind me of the interconnectedness of all things, and this reminder provides a useful function, especially when I am feeling isolated or unconnected. A common theme that I have observed with synchronicities is that when I begin paying attention to them, they seem to pay more attention to me; that is, when I direct more attention to them, they seem to increase in frequency. It is not clear whether this seeming increase in frequency is really that or whether I simply notice more often coincidences that are already there, but which I would otherwise miss if I were less attentive.

I have experienced times of seemingly contributing to the healing of persons and animals, either through "hands on" procedures or through intention and imagery of healing changes in distant individuals or animals. I also have focused similar goal-directed intentions and images on aims other than healing and, since these desired outcomes seem to occur more often than would be expected on the basis of chance or conventional causality, I have developed a reputation of being a "good wisher." I have also been blessed with a goodly number of appropriate satisfactions of unvoiced wishes or unvoiced needs. All of these experiences suggest real, and need-related, conscious and unconscious mental influences of remote biological and physical systems.

Other experiences have occurred when I released effort following long periods during which intense effortful striving and trying had not yielding the desired outcomes. An attitude of gentle wishing, rather than intense willing, seemed more favorable. Still other experiences may have been self-generated dramatizations that allowed me to have a greater empathic understanding of the similar experiences of others.

## LESSONS LEARNED

From this very small sampling of my own spontaneous experiences, I have learned a number of lessons about psi. The overriding lesson, to me, is that psi tends to occur in *need-related* contexts and the experiences serve a particular purpose or function. Another lesson is that psi can play a *dramatizing* role and serve to indicate or illustrate, either forcefully or in a manner helpful to understanding, some already-existing condition or state of affairs. This has aided my conceptualization of the many forms that psi awareness or influence may assume. It has led me to consider the possibility that even relatively accurate target-corresponding images or drawings or memories may simply be dramatizations of a more direct knowledge or connection with the target that already is present. The accuracies indicate that a nonlocal contact with the target has been established; the inaccuracies indicate that the dramatization process may be working with limited or only partially-accessible raw materials or vehicles or that the dramatization process itself is not in the service of complete sensory accuracy. Another lesson is that *conscious intent or effortful striving* are not necessary to the occurrence of psi events and may even interfere with psi under certain conditions. In considering the conditions under which these seven personal experiences occurred, it is already possible to suggest that receptive psi (or *direct knowing*, as I now prefer to call the process) may tend to occur under conditions of *altered consciousness, freedom from distractions, and reduced analytical mentation*, whereas active psi (or *direct mental influence*) may tend to occur under conditions of *increased emotionality or arousal* (as in the two PK instances mentioned). The sampled experiences indicate, however, that while these may be facilitating conditions, they are not necessary conditions for psi occurrences, for the latter may occur under more ordinary conditions as well.

It is interesting to observe that the understandings reached as a result of considering seven of one individual's experiences match rather well the more general findings that have

emerged from decades of careful laboratory work. This is both satisfying and disturbing. It is satisfying because the conclusions or generalizations are mutually supportive or confirming, and this increases one's confidence that the conclusions may be valid ones. It is disturbing when one considers that the decades of effort and expense allocated to the laboratory studies lead to conclusions similar to those that derive from only a few minutes of experiences and reflections from one individual.

But this is not all. Our laboratory confirmations stem from laboratory experiments that were originally suggested by and guided by thoughtful considerations of *personal psi experiences*. Consequently, these laboratory confirmations are not independent of conclusions or generalizations from everyday life experiences. They are simply specific types of elaborations and confirmations of those conclusions and have revealed no surprises or discoveries that could not have been anticipated on the basis of the initial nonlaboratory experiences themselves. Consider, for example, that a thoughtful review of the subjective experiences of others (although such experiences were not spontaneous, but rather occurred in the context of free-response experiments) led Rhea White to write her classic article on old and new methods of responding to ESP targets (White, 1964). Thoughtful consideration of his own paranormal dream experiences, and those of his clients, led Montague Ullman to initiate and carry through his dream telepathy studies at Maimonides Medical Center (Ullman & Krippner, 1970). Thoughtful consideration of personal psi and other exceptional human experiences likely contributed importantly to the yoga sutras codified by Patanjali (Taimni, 1961) in the second century B.C. These three strands, in turn, converged in Charles Honorton's life experiences and led him to initiate and carry out his well-known series of studies on noise-reduced, psi-conducive conditions and the Ganzfeld procedure. The research, in turn, confirmed experimentally what the individual experiencers, who indirectly suggested all of this research, had originally contended. The process went full



circle. It provided confirmations, but no real surprises. And this seems to be the pattern for most of our experimental work.

An attempt to recall "surprising" things I have learned from psi experiments (that I might not have known otherwise) produced the following short list: (a) the role of "randomness" in PK (although it is unclear whether physical randomness or psychological/perceived randomness or both is critical here), (b) the possible interrelationship between psi and the geomagnetic field, (c) the decline effect, (d) the suggestion that people cannot "read" very well psychically (i.e., that alpha-numeric targets are difficult, compared to more "right-hemispheric" target characteristics, (d) the "linger" effect discovered by Watkins et al., and (e) that laying-on-of-hands may produce physical/chemical changes in treated water.

Additional comments about confirmations are in order. According to our common way of looking at things, one person's experiences or conclusions are not terribly interesting. Only when several persons report similar experiences and come up with similar conclusions (i.e., when some form of consensus is reached) do we begin to pay attention. This is a reasonable position, for consistent repetitions do provide an air of generality and validity to any finding or conceptualization. So it would be good to encourage many investigators to observe, think about, and report their personal psi experiences and other exceptional experiences. But notice that this mode of thinking is an imperative of the conventional paradigm, which seeks general laws and assumes an underlying absolute reality that can be progressively discovered through independent replications. Reality is not viewed this way within the developing new paradigm, where there is just as much interest and value in individual experiences and in context-dependent occurrences (an idiographic emphasis) as there is in general laws (a nomothetic emphasis). And, because the qualities and needs of different individuals, experimenters, or contexts can interact so fully with what is observed

(the term "constructed" would be used for these observations, rather than "discovered"), one would expect a high incidence of unique experiences and outcomes and "nonreplications" to emerge from many repetition attempts. But, paradoxically, in the new paradigm, since there are many interconnections, the world would be expected to display considerable holographic properties. Observations made in one domain would be expected to be mirrored by observations in other domains. The results of studying one small sample of experiences would be expected to reflect those of many other small samples. This is good news to advocates of an experience-centered approach, for it suggests that representative sampling may not be as critical as previously thought.

#### LESSONS OF ANOTHER SORT

In addition to providing the lessons described above, my own psi and other exceptional experiences have suggested to me a number of additional conclusions. These could be viewed as additional lessons, but lessons of a somewhat different sort. My experiences, and those of many others, have given me glimpses of a part of Nature that appears to be profoundly interconnected and also responsive to human thought and human needs. This part of Nature also appears to possess qualities of being surprising, uncertain, unpredictable, uncontrollable, and perhaps not completely knowable. This may imply that the tools of science as we now know it and of rational thought can penetrate only so far into Nature's mysteries. This does not frustrate me, but rather, confirms some of what brought me into this field in the first place: a suspicion that ours is not a world of *nothing but*, but a world of *something more*.

#### A PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION

Some of you may be questioning "So what? How can investigators' personal experiences help advance our field?" I offer this as a partial answer to such a question. Surveys have indicated that scientists' personal experiences with the paranormal are likely to

be more important in determining their beliefs and attitudes toward psi than are their readings and studies of our professional, technical literature (McClenon, 1982; White, 1985).

If this is indeed the case, and if we wish to persuade the scientific community that what we are doing is valid, legitimate, and important, then what could be more favorable to our "cause" than to have many mainstream scientists experience many of their own convincing personal paranormal events? And what better way to facilitate this than for parapsychologists to have so many personal paranormal experiences that we can accept them and understand them sufficiently to help set the stage for others (including other scientists) to have and to recognize similar experiences?

#### TWO ANALOGIES

In this paper I have emphasized the virtues of the developing paradigm and of an experience-centered approach. By doing this, I do not wish to imply that we should abandon useful tools of the old paradigm. Approaches and methodologies are like condiments, savory spices which, when used wisely, enhance the flavor of our meals. Some are appropriate to certain dishes, some are not. Some do not seem to mix very well with one another. Yet, sometimes surprising combinations yield novel and satisfying results. Which spice is chosen depends upon the particular purposes, aims, tastes, and experiences of the spice-user. In this analogy, no spice is inherently any better or worse than any other; the spices are simply different.

But let me offer a second, complementary, analogy. Newton's laws work very well in our everyday world; they describe reality very well in the domain that is familiar to us. Under less familiar, more exceptional, conditions (such as near-light speeds), however, Newtonian descriptions become increasingly inappropriate. Here, Einsteinian descriptions provide a better fit with what is observed. Einstein's laws did not disprove or render obsolete those of Newton; they did, however, supersede them and indicated that Newton's

descriptions were valid only under certain boundary conditions and that they were special cases that could be derived from more general Einsteinian principles. Similarly, our familiar methodologies, approaches, and worldviews will serve us very well when we are dealing with the physical world. When we enter the realms of life, human functioning psi, and exceptional human experiences, however, these familiar methods, approaches, and worldviews are less appropriate. They are like Euclidean rulers that are not very helpful in non-Euclidean space. Other, more appropriate tools are needed. As Beloff (1990) has remarked, "If we are barking up the wrong tree, then we shall not find what we are looking for no matter what kind of ladders we use" (p. 128).

#### CLOSING

I began this paper with a quote from a mystic (although she would never call herself that), Evelyn Underhill. I shall close with a quote from a physicist, Nobel laureate Brian Josephson (1992): "If we wish to come to terms with the resistance that the natural world appears to have to being grasped by the methods of science, then a shift toward taking direct experience into account may be necessary for the future development of science" (p. 222). Because the mystic and the physicist are describing the same reality, the similarity of these two quotes is not surprising.

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