

# Parapsychology and Spirituality: Implications and Intimations

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There is no need for science to justify spirit. Nor can it do so.

As suggested long ago by Hugo of St. Victor and Bonaventure, and elaborated by Ken Wilber, there are at least three realms of being and three ways of accessing these realms.<sup>1</sup> There is a physical, sensory realm accessed by the *eye of the flesh*; a mental realm of ideas, thoughts, and images perceived by the *eye of the mind*; and a transcendental or spiritual realm known through the *eye of the spirit*. Each *eye* reveals a different aspect of reality, and what is revealed to one eye is not necessarily available to the others. Wilber reminds us that we commit category errors when we unwisely attempt to see everything through one eye only and allow one form of vision to usurp the domains of the other two. To approach a complete picture of reality, we must have, at least, triple-vision.

Psychologist Lawrence LeShan likewise describes three alternate realities--the *sensory*, *clairvoyant*, and *transpsychic*--within which one encounters different ways of being, different modes and objects of knowing, and different values. Different things are possible and impossible within each reality.<sup>2</sup>

To attempt to justify the spiritual through science (as science is conventionally understood) is to attempt to see the realm of the transcendental through the eye of the flesh or to know clairvoyant or transpsychic realities while remaining firmly within the bounds of the sensory reality. The shoes of the one do not fit the feet of the other. There is, however, *at least some overlap* among the three realities and among what is available to the three eyes. There are regions in which science, psychology, and spirituality intersect. Here, science--in the form of

psychical research and parapsychology--can encounter reflections of aspects of reality that are of value to those interested in spirituality. Here, science may have something useful to say.

*The Realm of the Sensible and Rational*

Charles Tart's "Western Creed" (page xx) epitomizes a dominant scientific worldview. According to this view, we are individual entities, dwelling and moving in our unique, isolated paths through a world of space and time, a world of limits. When we interact with one another or with other parts of nature, we do so by means of language and other physical signals and by means of conventional physical forces and energies. What we know of the world and of each other we have learned through our senses and through the patterns imposed upon earlier sensory information by our faculties of reason and intellect. We live in a world in which causality rules, in which causes always precede effects, and in which time flows inexorably from past, to present, to future. Our thoughts, images, feelings, and wishes are private, sometimes entertaining, often painful, but never able to exert *direct* influences upon others or upon the physical world. Reason and language are valued and require distinctions, limits, and boundaries for their functioning and maintenance. The world is not only a realm of dualities, but also a realm in which contraries duel for supremacy, in which stands are taken for and against, in which the middle is excluded.

In this world, there is a reluctance to examine embarrassing facts that do not accord well with currently accepted theory. There is a tendency to attribute reality only to the physical, to the objectively measurable. There is a privileging of the nomothetic, the general law, the universal pattern, over the idiographic, the unique, the individual instance. There is a mistrust of the subjective, of the personal.

The masculine way of action, power, and doing is elevated above the feminine way of receptivity, relationship, and being. Not only this scientism, but the scientific enterprise itself is often tinged with this masculine flavor in its pursuits of explanation, prediction, and control.

Today's scientists often echo the sentiments of Francis Bacon, whose writings contain statements such as "knowledge and human power are synonymous," "nature is only subdued by submission," "nature, like a witness, reveals her secrets when put to torture."<sup>3</sup> Bacon (1561-1626) was one of the earliest and staunchest advocates of the inductive and experimental method. He also was Attorney-General, and later Lord Chancellor, under King James I, and his close familiarity with the prosecution of witches may have influenced some of his favored metaphors. Huston Smith reminds us that we can control only what is inferior to us and that any discipline that studies solely what is subject to control and limitation cannot reveal anything transcendent--i.e., superior to us in intelligence, awareness, compassion, or any other criterion of worth.<sup>4</sup>

In common Western science, theory, mechanism, and rational explanation are valued over mere description and appreciation. The usefulness and practical application of knowledge is emphasized. There is consensus that meaningful personal experiences should be excluded from the arena of science and that, indeed, their admission may be grounds for suspicion of scientific objectivity and reliability.

Western science, when not corrupted into a rigid scientism, is a wonderful, self-correcting system for the acquisition of valid knowledge. The praise that it receives for its magnificent triumphs is rightly deserved. Yet, even in its unadulterated form, much is omitted. There is no place for values, purposes, meaning, quality, or spirit. Jacques Monod wrote: "The cornerstone of scientific method is ... the systematic denial that 'true' knowledge can be got at by interpreting phenomena in terms of final causes--that is to say, of 'purpose.'"<sup>5</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote: "We feel that even when all scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched."<sup>6</sup> Steven Weinberg wrote: "... there is an essential element in science that is cold, objective, and nonhuman," and "The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless."<sup>7</sup>

*Another Realm*

It was partly to combat pessimistic tendencies similar to those just highlighted, and those made explicit in Charles Tart's "Western Creed", that psychical research arose toward the end of the nineteenth century. <sup>8</sup> Its aim was to replace a philosophical and scientific view of "nothing but" with one of "something more."

Psychic phenomena are like flowers whose distinctiveness, brightness, beauty, and perfume attract attention, inspire awe, and compel approach. The early psychical researchers were fascinated by many of these flowers, and they sought to collect them and explain them using the methods of science. There were near-death experiences, out-of-body experiences, apparitions of the living and of the dead, hauntings, poltergeist disturbances, past-life recall, mental and physical phenomena of mediumship. When part of psychical research transformed itself into experimental parapsychology, the quest continued; but now the methods became more limited, and attention was focused upon certain flowers only. The method of choice became the controlled laboratory experiment, and the studied phenomena were limited almost exclusively to telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and psychokinesis. Indeed, often the search was limited to only certain parts, or to certain petals, of particular flowers. Much was ignored and lost. But scientists could now declare, with great confidence, that this and that petal did, indeed, exist.

Part of spirituality may be likened to a garden, which some say exists, and which is said to be filled with certain species of flowers found nowhere else. To the extent that science verifies the existence of some of these flowers, there is growth in evidence that is consistent with the existence of the garden itself and of its other contents. If minor miracles such as telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and psychokinesis do indeed occur, then *perhaps* other, grander miracles, healings, and powers (*siddhis*) described in the various mythological, religious, and

spiritual traditions can occur as well. At the very least, they become far less outrageous and impossible than before. And, it can be argued, if some of the curious phenomena have a reality, perhaps there also is a reality to the ontologies and epistemologies of our spiritual traditions; perhaps there are levels and ways of being and of becoming, of entities and processes, of ways of knowing (revelation, gnosis) and of doing (creation, emanation), that complement the more mundane forms of life as we know it.

This may be the major implication and promise of parapsychology: If certain exotic flowers exist, might not others? And if such flowers exist and thrive, may there not also be larger and more extensive plant and root systems that support and nourish them, systems of which these flowers are impressive but transient manifestations or emanations?

It is remarkable that science, itself, using its own methods, has validated the reality of the four major psychic phenomena. Telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and psychokinesis have been verified in thoughtful laboratory research to the satisfaction of reasonable persons who unbiasedly study the findings.<sup>9</sup> Further, such abilities are not rare, but seem to be widely distributed among the population. The Gnostic and alchemical symbol of Ouroboros--the image of the serpent curled into a circle, tail in mouth--comes to mind. The dragon devouring its own tail, consuming itself, may symbolize how science, in investigating paranormal phenomena, has used its own methods to turn on itself, thereby proving the limitations of those very methods. Using its criteria for studying what is material and physical, using its framework that only what is material and physical exists, science has demonstrated there is something other than the material and physical. This is a wonderful illustration of Heraclitus' law of *enantiodromia* (a running contrariwise) according to which everything tends, sooner or later, but especially when carried to extremes, to become its opposite. The Ouroboros also suggests a coming together, a bridge; and parapsychology is, indeed, a bridge that joins the scientific with the spiritual.

The psychic realm resembles that common ground inhabited by quantum physicists and mystics--a world more like a giant idea than like a giant machine. <sup>10</sup> It is a world in which sensation and reason no longer reign supreme, in which boundaries dissolve, in which limits are replaced by the limitless, in which space and time no longer seem to be critical factors. Here, persons, distantly separated and seemingly without the mediation of conventional informational and energetic exchanges, can share thoughts, feelings, images, movements, and physiological activities. Here, persons can gain access to the future through means other than rational inference, seemingly able to remember the future as well as the past. Here, mental processes of attention and intention can interact directly with and directly influence physical and biological systems. Here occur mutually arising meaningful coincidences or synchronicities, in the absence of conventional causality. Persons evidence direct knowing of remote events. Effects precede causes. Thoughts become things. Like Jung's psychoid level, it is a realm where mind is like matter and matter is like mind.

*Beyond Limits and Contraries*

The findings of experimental parapsychology suggest that the human mind can do things, can reach through space and time, in ways that human brains and bodies, alone, conceived as purely physical organs, cannot do. We are our brains and bodies but are also something more. Under certain conditions, we may transcend limits, including the limits of individuality.

The findings suggest that natural phenomena and processes exist that cannot be adequately encompassed by our current scientific framework nor fully addressed by current scientific methodologies. Therefore, that framework and those methods need extension and expansion if they are to claim fullness of understanding of our universe. A strange principle may guide us in extending our understanding--the principle of "standing it on its head." For every concept and every law, there may be a contrary concept or law that is equally valid. For

example, in modern physics, it is true that light is a particle; but it is also true that it is not a particle. Light is a wave, yet it is not a wave. It is true that matter is material, concretized, localized in time and space; but it is also true that matter is virtually entirely space and energy and is spread out nonlocally throughout time and space (before "observation" or "measurement" occurs). It is true that heavy bodies sink in water and cannot fly; but heavy bodies also can float in water and *can* fly. For any principle within the natural and human sciences, we can probably find an opposite or complementary principle that is equally true and that, under certain conditions, may supersede the first. It has been remarked, "The opposite of a truth is a lie. The opposite of a profound truth is another profound truth."<sup>11</sup> Science may currently be aware of only half of the complementary realities and principles necessary to complete the whole. Whereas it may be true that there are certain limits to processes, it is also true that those limits may be transcended. Events may be determined, and yet there is freedom. Causality is a well-established principle of nature, and yet nature sometimes may operate a-causally.

Many psychic phenomena, but especially psychokinesis, indicate the efficacy of intention, volition, and purpose, and suggest that it may profit us to put goal-directed, teleonomic processes and concepts back into our science. And, if intention and purpose are truly present within us, should they not also be present outside of us, in the universe at large? Transtemporal phenomena such as precognition invite us to question the adequacy of our conceptualizations of time and of causality itself. Mutually arising meaningful coincidences or synchronicities suggest an acausal connecting principle in Nature that complements causality.

### *Interconnectedness*

The occurrence of psychic phenomena seems to require a condition of profound and extensive interconnectedness among people and also between people and all of animate and inanimate Nature. Such interconnectedness has important implications for our understanding of

who we really are, of our individuality, of our true selves; and from these implications flow other, ethical implications for appropriately interacting with others and with our environment.

Nearly sixty years ago, Henri Bergson (1858-1941) used the image of "our large body"--co-extensive with our consciousness, comprising all we perceive, reaching to the stars--to describe this interconnectedness. "The habit has grown of limiting consciousness to the small body and ignoring the vast one," Bergson writes.<sup>12</sup> Could it be that the localized consciousness with which we are intimately familiar and which we know as our "ego"--the convincingness of locality and individuality--is simply a quirk of our ordinarily limited attention? And could a shift in attention reveal the extended range of our true, nonlocal consciousness, allowing direct knowing and direct mental influence of "remote" events? Patanjali favored such a view in the *Yoga Sutras*, and that view is consistent with the findings of contemporary parapsychology.<sup>13</sup>

We could, no doubt, treat one another with kindness, understanding, and compassion even if we were not profoundly and intimately interconnected in nontrivial ways. However, having direct knowledge and direct experience of our interconnections can greatly increase our love for one another and enhance our ethical behaviors toward one other. We can learn from parapsychology the factors and conditions that are more or less likely to lead to such direct experiences and use this knowledge to facilitate their occurrence.

It may be that our deep interconnectedness with each other and with all of Nature is *the* major conclusion that issues forth from the many findings of parapsychology. Perhaps this is what we are really telling ourselves by means of the myriad psychic phenomena that we allow ourselves to experience. All psychic phenomena may be impressive and sometimes elaborate indicators of an already present connectedness. What better way to dramatize to ourselves that we are truly one than to share--especially at great distances and in defiance of powerful conventional barriers--each other's thoughts, feelings, images, sensations, and reactions? And what better way to demonstrate that we are in intimate contact with all of reality than to touch

and move things with our minds? Perhaps the apparent transfer of information and the apparent forces that we seem to see in psychic functioning are not really what they appear to be. Rather they may be quick yet effective and convincing indicators, that are readily at hand (paths of least resistance, so to speak), when we wish to remind ourselves of our forgotten interconnections.

In general, psi experiences may be self-created metaphors and dramatizations--extremely real and concrete teaching stories that hold important latent meanings, lessons, and reminders that may have little to do with the more obvious literal and "informational" content of the experiences. It could be fruitful to ask ourselves: What is the real message, and what is merely the medium?

Experimental parapsychology reveals interconnectedness only indirectly. Its impact is primarily upon the intellect and is but a shadow of the fuller, more direct impact of oneness felt and known in the mystical experience. One may increase parapsychology's typically dilute yield by venturing into the broader area of psychical research, and it may be increased further still by exploring an even greater range of exceptional human experiences, as advocated by Rhea White (see page xx). Therein, one may learn not only from science, but also from the rich sources of art, poetry, metaphor, mythology, and direct experience. But for the greatest yield, one goes, as well, to the spiritual traditions themselves.

### *Reflective Patterns*

From the laboratory, findings and patterns have emerged which reflect observations and patterns of spiritual teachings. At the most obvious level, the finding that persons can exhibit direct knowing of, and direct mental interactions with, other living and nonliving aspects of the world is consistent with the many claims of clairaudience, visions, prophetic dreams, healings, and "miraculous" physical events reported in virtually every spiritual tradition.

From research that has demonstrated that persons are able to influence the bodily systems of other persons, mentally and at a distance, emerge clear implications, and possibly

applications, of mental or spiritual healing for purposes of physical wellness and psychological well-being. Studies indicate that attention and intention may be focused upon other persons to either facilitate or impede various biological processes. For example, we have conducted a long and extensive research program in which we found that persons are able to increase and decrease the autonomic nervous system activity of other persons, mentally and at a distance. We monitored electrodermal activity, which reflects the activity of the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system. The monitored person was stationed in one room and the "influencer" was stationed in a separate, distant room. Under the conditions of the experiments, sensory and other conventional forms of communication between the two persons were eliminated. The influencer attempted to influence the distant person's electrodermal activity according to a random schedule unknown to the person being influenced. The experimental procedure was computer-controlled and the electrodermal measurements were scored objectively by computer. We found that, compared to noninfluence, control periods, the distant persons did indeed evidence greater autonomic activity during periods when the influencers were mentally intending for this to happen, and showed lowered autonomic activity when reduced activity was the aim. We also found preliminary indications that persons are able to "block" unwanted influences upon their own physiological systems through their own interfering intentions and imagery. The mental strategies used by the successful influencers included: (a) producing the desired bodily changes in themselves, using self-regulation techniques, while intending for the distant person to change similarly; (b) visualizing or imagining the distant person in situations that would be expected to produce the desired bodily changes if the distant person actually were to find himself or herself in such situations; and (c) intending and wishing for the polygraph indicator (which reflected the electrodermal activity) to behave appropriately (i.e., in line with the influencers' intentions). Using similar designs, we found that persons were able to protect their own and others' red blood cells (i.e., to decrease the rate at which the cells broke down and

died under osmotic stress), mentally and at a distance, using strategies of attention, intention, and visualization of the desired outcomes. In these hemolysis studies, the rate of death of the blood cells was monitored in a blind fashion and objectively by means of a spectrophotometer that detected the state of health of the cells. Complete details of hundreds of these biological psychokinesis experiments may be found in three of our summary publications,<sup>14</sup> and similar work by other investigators also has been reviewed.<sup>15</sup>

This work on direct mental interactions involving living systems has two important implications for spirituality. First, the findings are consistent with the reported outcomes, within many spiritual traditions, of mental healing, spiritual healing, and intercessory prayer. Second, the fact that one person's physiological activity can be shown to reflect or mirror that of another person, even when the two people are physically separated by distance and by shields, suggests that at certain levels, the two apparently separate and distinct bodies are really one. Certain states of mind and stations of being can facilitate entrance into this realm wherein merging with another is possible.

It seems likely that a much greater range of processes could be similarly influenced. In any dyadic situation (teacher/student, therapist/client, nurse/patient, trainer/trainee), the mental "practice" by the first member of the dyad may directly facilitate what the second member of the dyad is attempting to do or learn. Thus, our states of mind and conditions of being can have important and direct influences upon the thoughts, feelings, images, actions, and being of others.

Some years ago, I was amazed and delighted to find that a large number of factors known to facilitate psychic functioning sorted themselves into three clusters that closely matched the three familiar virtues of faith, hope, and love--virtues emphasized in virtually all spiritual traditions.<sup>16</sup> *Faith* is related to belief, confidence, and trust, and it is known that these factors tend to enhance psychic functioning, whereas attitudes of disbelief, distrust, doubt, and suspicion are inimical to successful psi performance. There are indications that the more thoroughgoing

the belief, the greater are the psi effects. Many parapsychologists hold that feedback (knowledge of successful outcomes) is important to the participant in a psi experiment. Perhaps at least part of the usefulness of feedback may be attributed to the belief-encouraging and confidence-enhancing results of such feedback information. The presence or absence of belief, on the part of investigators themselves, may be, at least in part, responsible for the well-known "experimenter effect" in which certain experimenters consistently tend to obtain positive results in their experiments, whereas other experimenters consistently tend to obtain chance or even negative experimental outcomes.

An attitude of *hope* or confident expectation appears to facilitate psychic functioning. Hope is desire accompanied by expectation of fulfillment. The desire component can provide motivation and incentive, which can drive the psi process. At the same time, the expectation component can focus the process, directing it to one particular goal or outcome, as opposed to another. The role of hope, in its guise of wishing and wanting, is especially evident in psychokinesis, wherein a specific outcome is desired and expected--and comes to pass. Some of the mental strategies employed by successful practitioners of psychokinesis (e.g., imagery or visualization of the desired goal, focusing, concentration, attention-training) may themselves contribute to the expectation process.

The relevance of *charity* or love to successful psi functioning is most evident in cases of psychic healing and in healing analog studies in which the healer's feelings of love for the healee or for the healee surrogate, and strong positive feelings of merging and interconnectedness, may facilitate successful outcomes. In parapsychological experiments generally, positive dispositions toward the experimental situation and toward all persons involved in the study are found to be psi-conducive. The reduction of egocentric motives and methods is believed to be favorable to psi success. It was been suggested that altruistic motives facilitate positive outcomes of applied psi endeavors, whereas egocentric motives interfere with success.

Other sets of laboratory findings, especially those that emphasize the psi-facilitating qualities of spontaneity, absence of striving, and release of effort, are consistent with spiritual teachings of the importance and power of "grace." These findings also are congruent with spiritual beliefs that wonderful and miraculous things can happen when one is "at one with the Tao." <sup>17</sup>

Laboratory research has suggested that various forms of sensory disruption, restriction, or deprivation, and the experimental induction of various "altered states of consciousness" may increase one's access to the psychic realm. This is consistent with reports from spiritual traditions that access to spiritual realms may be enhanced by reducing worldly distractions, withdrawing attention from the fleshly, sensory eye, and entering nonordinary consciousness.

"If the doors of perception were cleansed," wrote William Blake, "every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite." Many spiritual disciplines have been developed to help attain such a cleansing, to achieve "lucidity" and an awareness of what is beyond appearances. Many of the components of these practices have been studied by parapsychologists and have been found to facilitate psychic functioning. A common characteristic of these components is that they are accompanied by a freedom from distractions and from internal and external constraints upon the bodymind, and that they result in deep quietude, stillness, and calmness at many levels of the organism. The methods would be quite familiar to followers of Patanjali's Eastern system of purification and control of the mind, <sup>13</sup> as well as to followers of the Western mystical tradition (so ably described by Evelyn Underhill <sup>18</sup>). Underhill presented a Western model of spiritual development characterized by stages of awakening, purification, illumination, the dark night of the soul, and unification with the divine. Parapsychologist Charles Honorton translated the Eastern model of Patanjali's Raja yoga into "a progressive system of psychophysical noise reduction." <sup>19</sup>

The first five stages were designed to systematically reduce the external causes of mental distraction. The first two stages (*Yama* and *Niyama*) involve the reduction of distractions associated with emotion and desire. The second two (*Asana* and *Pranayama*) involve reduction of somatic distractions. The fifth stage (*Pratyahara*) involves detaching attention from the sensory organs in order to isolate consciousness from external perception.

Freed from external somatosensory noise, the last three stages of Patanjali's system involve the elimination of internal cognitive distractions. This is accomplished by maintaining attention on a single object or image. These three stages designate increasing durations of concentration. The object of concentration serves to focus and limit attention within a narrowly-defined area. Concentration (*Dharana*) is achieved when attention is confined within the boundaries of a single object or image for a specified period of time. In this stage, attention is free to fluctuate within the defined area but may not wander outside of it. Meditation (*Dhyana*) involves the maintenance of concentration for a longer period of time. It is characterized by less movement of attention within the boundaries of the object or image, which is experienced with greater continuity. In the final stage (*Samadhi*), concentration is maintained for a still longer period. This stage is characterized by total continuity of attention on the object or image. Attention is said to be "absorbed" in the object and there is a dissolution of subject-object differentiation which is associated with an experience of transcending space-time. Collectively, these last three stages constitute a process which Patanjali calls *Samyama*. According to Patanjali, paranormal phenomena may be produced by performing *Samyama*. (Honorton, 1977, p. 438)

Numerous parapsychological studies have been conducted in which the components of Patanjali's model have been simplified, secularized, and tested for possible psi-favorable effects.

External sensory "noise" or distractions are minimized by sensory restriction procedures. Typically, this is accomplished through the use of a *Ganzfeld* technique that involves uniform visual and acoustic stimulation and that leads to an experimentally-induced hypnagogic condition. Attention is freed from external stimuli and is directed inwardly toward ordinarily ignored thoughts, feelings, and images. The density, vividness, and reality of imagery is greatly enhanced. Muscular noise/distractions are reduced by means of progressive muscular relaxation and biofeedback procedures. Autonomic and emotional noise/distractions are reduced through autogenic training exercises. Cognitive noise/distractions are reduced through concentration, attention-training, and proto-meditational exercises. All of these techniques, alone or in various combinations, have been associated with good psychic functioning in laboratory tests. <sup>20</sup>

Spiritual traditions suggest that too much attention to the eye of the mind (rational thought) may limit or even actively interfere with seeing through the eye of the spirit. Laboratory research has demonstrated that too much rational, analytical, interpretative thought can indeed interfere with accurate psychic functioning. Investigators of "remote viewing" (a combination of telepathy and clairvoyance testing involving more natural targets such as geographical sites) have found that logical, interpretative thought ("analytical overlay") can lead one astray, psychically, and they have developed means of identifying and reducing such interferences. <sup>21</sup> Overly structured, linear thinking ("cognitive constraints") has been shown to be psi-antagonistic, whereas a more fluid, spontaneous, creative mode of mental functioning (typically, one that is also rich in imagery) is psi-favorable. <sup>22</sup> As we saw in preceding paragraphs, excessive mental activity of any kind may similarly interfere. Psychic access improves when the drunken monkey of the mind is tranquilized and calmed through meditation and meditation-like techniques familiar to all spiritual seekers.

*Glimpses of a Greater Realm*

Experimental parapsychology has provided tantalizing intimations of a greater reality; but, to date, nearly all of these findings demonstrate simply that the mundane can be accomplished in extramundane ways. In order to meet the verification criteria of current science, parapsychologists interested in extrasensory perception have focused almost exclusively upon the novel, psychic conveyance of mundane information that can be verified by conventional senses and therefore is redundant with sensory knowledge. We have virtually ignored possible psychic access to aspects of reality that are not readily evident to the senses. Suppose I hide a small object in a box and ask someone to "psychically peer into the box" and describe its contents. Heretofore, we have limited our questions about psychic functioning to ones concerned with accuracy in describing the sensory realm. In the present example, if I am able to accurately describe beforehand what I and others will see when the box is later opened, then I have exhibited psychic functioning. Anything else that I might learn is ignored or discounted. But I already have eyes and ears and other senses to deal with these readily apparent (evident) aspects of the physical realm. Why would Nature have bestowed upon us a "second sight" or "sixth sense" that is so redundant with our regular senses? We could expand our questions about psi to ask: What can psi tell us about the world that is *not* immediately obvious or evident to our conventional senses? Going back to the example, perhaps psi can tell me something about the history of the object, rather than simply about its sensory qualities. Or perhaps I can know something about future events in which the object will participate. Perhaps psi can tell me about relationships, associations, or connections in which the object has previously participated, in which it is presently involved, or in which it will play some role in the future. Perhaps psi can inform me not only about a distant, hidden person's clothing or appearance, but also more interesting things about that person's history, future, relationships, condition of physical and psychological health or illness, emotional condition, state of consciousness, potential, achievements, stage of spiritual development, current goals and challenges, and the best ways to

help that person in his life and along her spiritual path. I suspect psi is helping all of us learn such things all the time and that this is part of the "art" of education, medicine, nursing, and therapy. But such questions, curiously, have been ignored by experimental parapsychology. No doubt, one reason for this is that these qualities are not easy to measure, compared to the readily assessed color or shape of an object hidden in a box. Although challenging, we could ask psi to help us perform much more interesting tasks such as discerning hidden meanings, purposes, significances, and relationships. We ask psi to tell us about the physical realm--to duplicate the eye of the flesh. But what can psi help us learn about non-ordinary realms? Can it tell us about qualities of the physical universe at its extremes of largeness, smallness, emptiness, fullness, very high and very low temperatures or energy levels? Can we "remote view" the ultimate constituents of matter and energy? <sup>23</sup> What can psi tell us about the nature of time and of causality? Can psi inform us of the existence and nature of realms other than the physical? Can we discern, psychically, characteristics of persons, objects, or events in "psychic space" that are not immediately obvious to our senses? And can we agree on these? Can we venture, individually or in groups, into nonordinary realities, make "observations" there, remember and bring back what we have learned, compare notes and reach consensus with others who have made similar journeys? <sup>24</sup> What can psi tell us about psi itself? What might we learn, psychically, about our own true natures, our human beinghood? In asking such questions, we would be asking psi to function not as the eye of the flesh, but rather as the eye of the mind and of the heart, and perhaps as even more novel eyes. These new questions are challenging ones, but they are questions of extreme interest and importance. Should it choose to investigate such issues, parapsychology's overlap with spirituality would increase greatly. <sup>25</sup>

Researchers who are presently exploring certain forms of psychokinesis are playing a somewhat more exciting game, for we are studying mental ways of doing what cannot be done by ordinary means, such as influencing radioactive decay or rapidly influencing complex

biological processes. Still, we can raise our sights to more meaningful goals of even greater spiritual significance. Rather than restrict ourselves to producing physical or physiological changes via our intentions, we might also explore direct mental influences upon psychological, social, cultural, psychic, and spiritual processes in ourselves and in others. We have taken a few feeble steps in this direction in our own research. We have found that persons are able to help other persons improve their mental imagery skills and attention-focusing skills, mentally and at a distance.<sup>26</sup> It would not be difficult to extend this work to more interesting dyadic interactions, nor is it difficult to see possible useful educational, medical, therapeutic, and social applications of "mentally helping" others with their mental, emotional, imaginative, creative, and spiritual work.

Perhaps most importantly of all, we can begin to explore, deeply and intensively, the *meanings* of psychic and other exceptional human experiences to those who have these experiences. We can study the impacts of such experiences upon the lives of the experiencers. We can interest ourselves not only in the fact that such experiences exist, but also in why they happen to particular persons at particular times and in particular ways. What are their outcomes, their consequences, their fruits? How are they and how are they not assimilated into the experiencer's life, self-concept, growth, being and becoming? Our goal can become, in the words of the epigraph of Carolly Erickson's *The Medieval Vision*, "Not to prove, but to discover."<sup>27</sup>

Parapsychological findings can be useful to those on a spiritual path as they can provide a certain degree of confidence and trust that at least some of the processes and concepts encountered are "real" in a more traditional sense and are not delusions, projections, or misinterpretations. They also can serve to remind us that we are not alone in having exceptional experiences; such experiences are normal, natural, and remarkably widespread. But these scientific reassurances, though of value, are only partial: A great deal of what is encountered

along the spiritual path is quite beyond the reach of current science. Here, one must be armed with trust, faith, hope, love, discernment, and a tolerance for ambiguity and for contraries, rather than with the feelings of safety, certainty, familiarity, and understanding that science can provide.

Spirituality addresses one's highest values and ultimate realities and how one lives one's everyday life in congruence with those values and realities. Spirituality also deals with the Beyond, that which is other and greater than surface appearances, and with how we relate to that Beyond. Thus, spirituality cannot be restricted solely to the sphere of intellect. Spirit permeates the material and impacts upon all facets of our lives, both exceptional and mundane--upon our bodies, our emotions, our relationships, and our expressions of creativity. The findings of parapsychology currently address a small part of this whole. Even the ethical implications of interconnectedness remain merely academic until they are directly and fully experienced and assimilated into our being, our actions, and our personal worldview. Parapsychology may provide confidence that there is, indeed, *something else*. Parapsychology may even provide hints about accessing that *something else*; but these hints are only invitations to enter other realities, to experience them directly, and to bring back what we can to enrich our everyday world.

## Notes and References

1. The Abbey of St. Victor, on the outskirts of Paris, was the cradle of the Scholastic theology of the twelfth century. Hugh of St. Victor and Richard of St. Victor were two of the best known Victorine mystics. John of Fidenza (better known as Bonaventura or St. Bonaventure) was a thirteenth century Franciscan. The "three eyes" (and their "three lights") are described in Bonaventura's (1953) *The Mind's Road to God* (pp. 7-10, 34-38). George Boas (translator). New York: The Liberal Arts Press. (Original work published xxxx). The more modern treatment may be found in Wilber, K. (1990). *Eye to Eye: The Quest for the New Paradigm* (pp. 1-81). Boston: Shambhala.
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11. The quotation has been attributed to quantum physicist Niels Bohr.
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