

FEARS OF THE PARANORMAL IN OURSELVES AND OUR COLLEAGUES: RECOGNIZING THEM, DEALING WITH THEM

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ABSTRACT

Ostensibly objective scientists frequently show quite irrational and unethical behavior when presented with data about psi (psychic phenomena), the paranormal, subtle energies, and the like. Observations and some research suggests that, in addition to ignorance, semi-consciousness and unacknowledged fears of psi affect their thought and behaviors. Even researchers who advocate the importance of psi sometimes show similar distorted behavior, especially when effect size goes beyond statistically-significant-but-practically-trivial effects and become strong. Such unrecognized and unacknowledged resistance can sabotage both research and application. The researcher is not independent of the research in these areas. This paper focuses on recognizing and dealing with these widespread ambivalences and fears about psi phenomena.

KEYWORDS: Experimenter bias, fear, healing, parapsychology, psi, resistance, subtle energy

My topic today is fears of the paranormal. I have to start by saying this is not only a complex topic, about which I know little, but it's not a natural topic for me. I'm by nature an optimist, so my preferred way of dealing with fears is to forget about them in a hope that they never happen! Or, if I'm forced to give any thought to it, at least I can intellectualize my fears and put them in a nice box where they won't have an effect on me.

The topic of fear is not simply an intellectual topic. It's an intensely emotional topic. As some of you know, in one of my vocations I'm interested in understanding consciousness, and I proposed the idea of "state-specific sciences," where to really observe and understand particular phenomena, like fear, you have to be in a fear-dominated state of consciousness. So I've arranged for a terrifying event to happen approximately every 5 minutes, starting in about 15. . .

Ha! Actually, I'm just an intellectual; I wouldn't do anything like that! I wish I could say I had such a mastery of fear that I knew how to lead people in and out of the appropriate emotional state while remaining in a learning mode. Maybe some day I'll activate that emotional theme, though my intellect says, "Not if I can help it!"

So, we'll talk about fear today, fear of the paranormal, of the kind of "subtle energies" phenomena all of us work with. I don't have final answers, so my goal today is basically to stir you up. It's a topic that really has to be thought about, and it has to be dealt with in various ways. Fear is something that runs around in the background all the time and distorts what we do in terms of trying to understand. Also, it distorts attempts at applications. And certainly it has a lot to do with whether this field gets any kind of acceptance. So I'll try to stimulate you. We'll see what happens.

A lot of you work within a scientific setting, or have scientific colleagues or medical colleagues who say that science is the backbone of their practice. Usually when they say "science" in this way they mean a combination of being *logical*, being *open minded* and *curious*, and letting the facts fall where they may. Those are the *ideals of science*. Science in its ideal form is actually a tremendous spiritual vocation with a commitment to stay open to reality no matter

what you'd like it to be. As you know, scientists and physicians in general are quite proud of their objectivity and open-mindedness.

Now, many of you have done research and applications on things like subtle energies, and when you've presented this to your colleagues you've of course gotten very enthusiastic receptions with something so interesting. Right?! *[Audience audibly groans.]* No? Oh-oh.

Jerry Wesch plans to publish something about the problems some members of ISSSEEM have had, and he's going to be talking more about that in the panel this afternoon. But let's get a little experiential data with a show of hands at this point. How many of you, for instance, have talked about your research or applications with subtle energies and found, let's say, that criticisms seem to be a lot more intense than the subject warranted? Let me see some hands here. *[Almost all hands go up.]* Maybe I should just ask for those who haven't met that kind of reaction to put your hands up! How many of you have felt defensive about your interests? *[Almost all hands go up.]* And how many of you felt that you've been emotionally attacked, personally, for your interests? *[Almost all hands go up.]* Yes? Right! We're all among friends. Right? And remember, as they say, just because you know you're paranoid doesn't mean they *aren't* out to get you!

Our organization talks about energy medicine and subtle energies. Those are good scientific-sounding terms, undoubtedly chosen with the goal of inching a little bit further toward respectability. But come on, we know we're basically into parapsychology here. Whatever name you use, "parabiology" or "paramedicine" or something like that, we're talking about a subject that is not part of the mainstream.

Now the prefix "para," as it's usually applied in parapsychology, means "beyond" or "alongside of." Being curious, and since I have a wonderful new dictionary program on my computer, I thought I would just check on the full meanings of "para." I found that besides meaning "alongside of" or the like, it also means "incorrect" and "abnormal" in many applications. And I think we've discovered that others often like that usage best with respect to what we do.

So we're doing paramedicine or parabiology, and we're working contrary to the dominant materialistic paradigm. In fact, you might say that our work is

antimaterialistic. Or, to use a term I like, most of what we're doing is *anti-scientistic*. Now I'm not saying *anti-scientific*, because there is no conflict between what we do and *genuine* science, genuine open-mindedness to reality. But because current findings in science and related fields of discourse, have tended to become fossilized and defended like in a fundamentalist religion, with its own Inquisition, what we are doing is definitely *anti-scientistic*.

My goal today is to share what I've learned in parapsychological research over the last 30 years about the kinds of *fears and resistances* that usually work in the background and effect what we do, what we try to learn, and so forth, and on *acceptance*, in the hope that we might learn something from these fears and resistances and not go through the suffering that formal parapsychology has gone through. I'm not sure how optimistic I am about whether we can actually do much in terms of acceptance, because these fears are usually implicit and hidden, but hopefully we can do something.

Now as I said, learning about these things is important, even though I personally *prefer* never to think about them. But if we want to gain acceptance in mainstream medicine and science, which would give us many more resources to find out what it is we're studying, we have to deal with this kind of material. And not only resources, we need to get help from people in other disciplines.

Technically, we don't really know what we're doing when we talk about energy medicine, and all that. Nevertheless, *there's something there*, and it's something important. We have theories sometimes, but we don't really know, in any very satisfactory way, the details. Nevertheless, we need to learn about these subtle energy and parapsychological phenomena, simply for aid in understanding what is the nature of existence.

Let me give you some examples of the kind of resistance that happens on an overt level to parapsychological findings. The late Chuck Honorton, one of the great parapsychologists, used to have an extensive file on this. I don't know what has happened to it, but over the course of many years various parapsychologists would submit studies to *Science*, because wouldn't it be wonderful to get publication in such a prestigious national science journal as that?! And, of course, their articles were all rejected. Chuck studied the reasons that were

given for rejection and found that if it was a paper that presented empirical *data* showing some parapsychological effect, the reason given for rejection was that since there was no proper theoretical understanding of this, there was no point in publishing it, because the data didn't make sense. On the other hand, if the paper was *theoretical*, it was rejected on the grounds that there were no empirical data to support this kind of theorizing. And if worst came to worst, *Science's* editors could always find an agriculture professor in Iowa who of course knew nothing about the field but would say the paper was unsuitable and justify it's rejection. It's a sad and revealing story. It shows the illogical, irrational resistance side of the scientific establishment. I strongly believe in the ideals of science. But science is done by real people who are as hung up as you and I, and have real problems when they come face to face with the paranormal.

Another example of the degree of resistance this field generates, is that we have a very active international organization devoted to *debunking* it, which is very, very strange if you think about it. Sometimes detractors talk about the money being *wasted* on parapsychology research, but, in fact, the money spent on parapsychology research is trivial. I did a survey years ago and found that all the laboratories in the United States and Canada put together spent only half a million dollars a year, which might otherwise buy half a minute for a toilet paper commercial on national television.¹ So it's not waste of money that's the real issue.

I can understand some of these people getting incensed about charlatans who claim they are doing something psychic, or spiritual, and are clearly ripping people off. But why would they go out of their way to stop *scientific research*, especially if these organizations were really skeptical and scientific? "Skeptic" means not having made up your mind but looking at the evidence. You would think instead that they would be helping us *get* grant money. But that's not what is happening. Instead, you get incredible emotional intensity. Basically, these people spend a lot of time and tremendous amounts of emotional energy *opposing* research. As a psychologist, this gives me pause. It doesn't make rational sense to devote so much emotional excess, and energy and time, opposing something that's trivial, considering all the other problems there are in the world. What's lying underneath all that?

Admittedly there's always been a rational component in the resistance to parapsychological research, and that is the injunction to do better and better experiments. And the result has been that *the methodological quality of experiments in formal parapsychology by and large is much better than in any other area of science*. There's been so much criticism of parapsychology for so long that the methodology has become really tight and there's simply no *rational* way to dismiss that rigorous kind of evidence.

I don't think that's quite the case yet in energy medicine. And so from this rational perspective I want to encourage you to make experimental designs as tight as possible. Don't do casual experiments if you ever plan to publish them. If you want more than talk in the halls about "something interesting I've seen," be rigorous. Critics of this field love for a sloppily designed experiment to be published because that's the kind they can talk about. They never refer, of course, to studies that are methodologically of high quality.

So, methodological standards have to be high. If you are a new experimentalist, even if you *really* understand the subtle energy part, learn the methodology, or work with the people who know it. Read something like the *Handbook of Parapsychology* that Benjamin Wolman and a number of people put out.² Take four weeks to go to the course at the Institute for Parapsychology offered in Durham each summer to really learn basic methodology. On a rational level that is crucial. Sloppy experiments just fuel the critics.

That's the end of *rational* objections to parapsychology and subtle energies and to energy medicine. The basic problem is not really rational, it's emotional. What I said about methodology is true, of course, and we have to do it. Experiments have to be absolutely top quality. But even though that is *necessary*, it's *not sufficient* for any kind of progress in this field. We have to look beyond methodological impeccability. So why is there so much excitement over something that, from a rational point of view, is not all that important? What might be the psychological roots motivating the skeptics, and what might be some of the things affecting us *implicitly*, unconsciously, that we don't know about?

Let me start this with a personal anecdote. Back in the early and mid-60's I did a lot of hypnosis research. I was truly impressed by the power of hypnosis.

I still am. Though I did a lot of work in the field I could never get over the fact that I could sit down and talk to someone for fifteen or twenty minutes and for some people their total reality changed. This was a *massive* effect. I've never understood, therefore, why hypnosis is a fringe-area topic in psychology. The effects are a thousand times bigger than almost all things psychologists study. But that's how it is. So I was interested in hypnosis and that included reading a lot of the older literature in which *psychic* abilities routinely became available in deep hypnotic states. One of the phenomena discussed in particular was hypnosis at a distance, telepathic hypnosis, where unbeknownst to a trained subject an experimenter would sit down at some randomly chosen time and try to induce him into a trance and then have someone check to see if they'd gone into a trance state at the corresponding time. I'll talk about some of the details of this later.

I was fascinated. I thought, this is a very powerful experiment, I think I'd like to do some studies like that. And yet I also noticed ambivalence because a part of me said, "Wow, if this would work, I would be powerful!" Another part of me said, "Suppose I tried it, and it worked. Oh, my God!"

Maybe I'd like to do it and have it *not* work, and then I'd feel more comfortable. I just noticed a lot of mixed emotional feelings about this kind of thing. I didn't have anybody to talk to about it, and I was young in my parapsychology vocation at that time. But I had become aware, since I'm what the old psychology books call morbidly introspective, that I had ambivalent feelings about how well psychic events should work, and maybe there were *negative* uses of psi, even though I did "nice" positive experiments.

In 1970 I gave a talk at the American Society for Psychical Research in New York³ and afterwards there was a reception held in my honor with a lot of parapsychologists who had been in the field much longer than I. I had been in it long enough though, to feel secure in talking about this funny ambivalent feeling I had. These older and wiser heads, I thought, could give me advice. Possibly the ambivalence was just my weird psychopathology and nobody else had any concerns about this kind of thing. Maybe there was some simple way to deal with this kind of fear and ambivalence, that they could give me the clue to. So, after the reception had gone on for a while, and with my

position as guest of honor giving me the ability to manipulate the conversation, I brought up the topic of fear of psi and asked what other people thought about it. This went over like a lead balloon. The conversation immediately drifted on to other things. Three or four times I brought this up, and people immediately talked about other things.

Now, you know, I'm no clinical hotshot but I suspected that there was something funny going on here, so I suddenly had this inspiration and using my power as guest of honor I said, "Look, I've just developed an interesting experiment. It's a thought experiment." Physicists do thought experiments all the time, so I used that term deliberately to pull in that prestige. I said, "What I want you to do for ten minutes, is just as much as possible believe something I'm going to tell you, and then tell me your immediate emotional reactions to it."

To me this didn't seem like a terribly threatening thing. I thought—because I'd been living in California for a number of years by that time—maybe we could move into a little experience. Right? So I said, "Look, here's what I want you to believe." They had to go along because I was the guest of honor and I was starting to talk well at this point, too. I said, "Okay, here's what's happened. I have developed a new drug—we'll call it telepathine—I've got some in my pocket. The effects of this drug are such that if you take it once it will open up your mind so that you know all the thoughts and feelings of everybody within a 100-yard radius. You won't have to take any more because the effect is permanent. Now, who wants some of the drug?" Well, this intellectual conversation broke out, and I said, "Yes, but who wants the drug?" Oh, they discussed the interesting possibilities here, and finally I had to say, "Who wants the drug?!" Nobody wanted it.

Now this was very peculiar because you know you don't go into parapsychology to get rich and honored. These were people who had been in it for a long time. It involved considerable personal sacrifice and at least a minor degree of martyrdom, if not a major degree of martyrdom. These were people who obviously were really interested in this stuff and presumably would like it to work well, and understand it, and all that kind of thing. Yet in this *belief experiment*, when I forced them to come right back to their reactions nobody wanted the drug. I thought that was very interesting.

Since then I've tried to do that experiment more systematically. I did it in a lot of workshops. I would do workshops dealing with the paranormal, and, as in this ASPR reception, try it with people who were almost all "believers," people who were enthusiastic about psychic stuff, who were very interested in it. I'd do this experiment and most people did not want the telepathy drug. A few people would put their hands right up. "Funny" people I thought when I talked to them. Some of them had good reasons, but most people, even in spite of their enthusiasm about psychic things, when I had them look at it *emotionally* this way, no! Understand, this is not deep psychological probing. This is a relatively easy kind of thing, although saying the telepathic effect would be permanent probably twisted the intensity up a bit. That was deliberate, though.

I did this experiment more systematically back in 1984 with the help of a student colleague, Catherine LaBore.⁴ I said to her, "Why not, instead of just me doing this, why don't you systematically interview some people about this and we'll get a sample of people and collect all the reactions and transcribe them and get an idea of how people feel." So she worked with some 37 people, about evenly divided between students and townspeople living in Davis, which is not a sample of the general population but of a university town, somewhat like the kind of people who volunteer for parapsychological experiments, especially people in Psychology. As you know, psychology is the study of the college sophomore by former college sophomores for the benefit of future college sophomores! And parapsychology tends to go that way sometimes.

We said, "In this experiment I'm going to ask you to believe that what I'm going to tell you is true, and then we'll discuss your feelings about it, your emotional reactions. Is this okay with you?" We wanted permission, and everybody gave permission. So then with half of these people we used a question about psychokinetic control which I'm not going to go into here, because those results were much more scattered. The others were told the following: "Recently, a new mind-altering procedure has been developed." We dropped the "drug" word because by that time it evoked too much ambivalence. "This procedure is safe, simple, and painless and we're looking for volunteers to participate. The effect of the procedure is that it enables you to read the thoughts and experience the feelings of anyone within a 100-yard radius. There's no known way to reverse the telepathic

effects. The change is permanent. Please give me your emotional reactions to this. Don't worry about justifying them or rationally explaining them at first, we can talk about that later. We want to survey your *feelings*." It's important, you know, to not let people go off on the rationalization trail.

Results were almost uniformly negative. There were a few positive responses, but they were ambiguous things like, "It would be interesting;" without much elaboration. Definite negative responses predominated. Here are examples of what people said. "I could be swamped by people's dreams, I could never get any sleep." Or, "If I could turn it on and off, choose what to know and *not* to know, it would be OK.." That's what we *all* want in life, right, to choose what to know and what not to know?

There were concerns about one's own boundaries. "If you had somebody else's thoughts, how would you ever distinguish if they were theirs or yours?" Lots of concern about the irreversibility, the permanence of this thing. "If it was permanent, it would be too much. If it was temporary, well maybe. But to be always aware of what other people are thinking? No, I wouldn't do it." There were concerns about the responsibility this would bring, the power that this would bring. "If I knew they were lying to me, I would be in a bind whether to tell them. It could end up causing emotional strain to the person who's altered."

Another person said, "You'd know so much more, it might be hard just to be able to participate in society. You'd have insight for changes or things like that, but suppose no one believed you or thought you were crazy." There were concerns about violation of privacy. "I don't think I have the right to read somebody else's mind without their permission." Or another person saying, "It would freak people out if I started responding to what they were thinking or feeling, without them letting me know what they were thinking or feeling." I actually had an interview with a woman who works in a Western city who says she has this kind of ability and has to be so careful. She had the habit of telling people at work the answer to a question they hadn't asked yet. She learned to be very, very careful. It got her in trouble.

Now again, this is not deep, psychological probing. These were ordinary people who presumably weren't overly involved with psi in their everyday life. Later, I had an opportunity to do a little more exploration of these fears of psi with

a unique group,⁵ a group of people who were already operating as professional psychics in many cases, some of them making their living at it, and being part of a training seminar by Helen Palmer, well-known West Coast psychic, now better known for her books on the enneagram.

This group of 14 were in a training seminar to make their psi responses more accurate, and I thought it would be interesting if I could get these people to talk about irreversible telepathy. They were, of course, people much more involved in psychic stuff than an ordinary person. I wondered, did they have any ambivalence?

Well, of course, they were all strongly positive about psi, but some very interesting reactions came out. There was a whole class of reactions of what you might call “fear of the unknown.” For instance, “When psi is turned on, I don’t know what is going to come up, that is out of control, I don’t like that.” There were other concerns about loss of control, and even possession. One man said, “Who knows what you might be opening up to. It’s a loss of ego. My first psi experiences were in Brazil, where psi stuff, mediumistic stuff, is taken for granted. How can you let go of ego and let something else come into you and speak through you? The practice of Oriental-style meditation reduced that fear for me.” But he didn’t say the fear was gone, he said it was reduced.

There were concerns about loss of control over the direction of one’s life. One person said, “I can’t differentiate now between *this is rational life* and *this is psychic life*. I started ‘running energies’ a few years ago, charged out of my chakras and went out. It is hard to describe, it was very profound. I don’t fear death anymore, I know *good* exists. But, the next day my girlfriend didn’t recognize me I was changed so much. I could have gone out there again the next night, but I had to put some brakes on it. I felt the fear of losing control of my life. I might be carried somewhere else in a radical way, and I wasn’t ready to go there yet. My choice was that I wasn’t ready. It will come back when I’m ready, but it was fear that held me back then.”

Then an interesting thing, a fear of *using* psi ability. If you use it openly, it gives power to other people to validate or invalidate you. One respondent said, “It was frightening to begin to do psychic readings. I usually kept my psychic

stuff to myself. I'd have to say something, and then wait to see if the other person would validate it. It's like exposing yourself, especially if you're going on and on without getting any feedback. Like taking a dive off a cliff." [*Noting ISSSEEM audience reaction*] I see some of you here resonate with this. "They might think I was crazy, I could be really humiliated saying all these wild things. I had to deal with it by just doing it and doing it."

I'm not sure that's the best way to handle the fear, but we'll touch on that later. One man was concerned about the distortions of psychic functioning induced by his own personal need to please people. He said, "I wanted everything to be okay for the person I was reading for, and when it wasn't, that raised a bunch of personality issues in me. I mean, I cater to Reichian therapy to help get grounded, although that raises issues too, but all I can do is keep sticking with it. I have to fight the desire to make everything okay, to block any unpleasant psychic stuff. It makes me give incorrect information. I help people more if I tell them what I really see."

A number of these psychics expressed strong ambivalent feelings over the forced change in their own nature that occurred as they kept practicing psychic stuff. One said, "If you do get through 'to the other side' you'll be unalterably changed. I'm afraid of that. I got into this to read other people. But the effects on the reader's personality are more profound than on the people you read for. It's constantly bringing up your own noise and ego in ways you have to sit with. You're going to get nailed for that in this work. Your ego stays six inches in front of your nose."

A number of people expressed fears about picking up and succumbing to other people's emotions and illnesses. One said, "Other's fears can make me sick for days sometimes. I have to use special techniques to get rid of them." Then, echoing on our earlier theme, there was a lot of concern about how *you* validate experience once you open yourself up to psychic stuff. What is reality? A person said, "A more fearful issue is when you start to get into other realities to make more profound changes in yourself. Then what validates *your* reality? You can't even trust the support of the people that you're with, that you love, because what differentiates that from a cult? You're far from the realities of your culture. What feedback can you believe? Do I keep on, or am I crazy? Is this *it*, or am I crazy?" This of course, is the big issue, and is the reason for working on yourself in the sense of psychological growth.

A lot of fears were expressed about the isolation that psychics have from ordinary people. One person said, "Life can be made difficult. When I go to college functions with my husband, I go by his name, not by my psychic practice name, to avoid the complications and rejections I would otherwise run into. I don't open myself." I suspect a lot of you are aware of that one.

Then there was a lot of fear that as you get really involved in using psychic abilities, you make other people uncomfortable and frighten them. One person said, "I do body work and am a healer also. I can touch someone and remove a block. People do feel it when I touch them. I don't do it until I feel they are ready to handle the issues around this, issues of power, etc. I work with the issues that come up, because they do get afraid. I've been called a lot of names, like a witch. So, I focus on people's personal experiences with using or experiencing psychic kinds of powers."

Let me balance that now by talking about researchers, rather than subjects. In parapsychology, unfortunately, there is a long running myth, taken over straight from psychology, about the objective experimenter who works with subjects. One never says so, but of course the assumption is that the researcher is *superior* to the subjects! The experimenter *subjects* people to things, you know. There's a social game being played there, which tends to distort results in psychology in general. And this happens in parapsychology also. As part of the delusion one runs on oneself to support this kind of crazy game, one believes in one's own *objectivity, intelligence, good intentions*, and all that kind of thing. And so, of course, one doesn't have any problem with irrational things like fears of psi. Ha!

Now let me go back to the question of telepathic hypnosis and start on another theme. Dr. Jule Eisenbud is retired now, but he was a psychoanalyst who contributed a great deal to our understanding of this field. He once made a list (which I could not find just before this conference) of really successful experiments in parapsychology over the last 75 years which somehow, after tremendous initial success, nobody bothered to do anymore, including the people who originally did them! Let me give an example from his book.⁶ He's talking about telepathic trials done at the end of the last century by Pierre Janet and other people.

In a series of experiments which Janet reported some months after his early work, Leone, his highly trained telepathic subject, was not only repeatedly hypnotized at a distance in the presence of several lay and medical witnesses, but was also made to carry out post-hypnotic commands mentally given. Of 21 trials done over a period of days, and distances of at least 500 meters, no less than 16 were judged a complete success. The times for the trials were randomly chosen. All trials in which Leone was not found in deep trance when the investigators entered her house, or when the trance did not follow the mental suggestion within a quarter of an hour, were counted as failures. During this entire period, Leone fell into only two trances which were considered spontaneous and outside the experimental program.

Another time when she had been incompletely awakened from a previous cataleptic state and had done nothing but doze in the intervening two hours, the post hypnotic commands which were successfully carried out were simple acts, such as going into another room and lighting the lamp in broad daylight. In other words, they were not the sort of things that would happen spontaneously. Evaluating these results, Janet wrote, "Are we to imagine that on 16 occasions there was a rather exact coincidence? Such a supposition is a little unreasonable. Was there at any time involuntary suggestion on our part? All I can say, and I say this with utmost sincerity, is that we took every possible precaution to avoid this." And Eisenbud goes on to say that the now-celebrated Leone was subsequently studied by Charles Richet, professor of physiology at the faculty of medicine of the University of Paris, and later a Nobel Prize winner. He successfully duplicated the results of Janet and Gilbert. *We have a very powerful phenomena here.* Besides those of Janet, four other papers on telepathic hypnosis were read before the Society of Physiological Psychology in the winter of 1885 and the spring of 1886.

But, Eisenbud says, now comes the puzzling thing. With the exception of one well written account of hypnosis experiments on traveling clairvoyance by a Swedish physician in 1892, practically all work on the telepathic aspects of hypnosis came to a standstill by the end of the decade in which its most significant and most promising results were achieved. One could imagine that the writers of these reports might have felt something of the wild surmise of Cortez catching his first breathtaking view of the Pacific. They might have sensed that no other studies they were likely to pursue could possibly match in

importance the experiments they had barely embarked upon. Would have starved, if need be, to continue such investigations that might have held the key to profound enigmas in biology, medicine, anthropology, sociology, philosophy and other riddle-wrapped subjects. But nothing like this developed. Janet suddenly found that the quirks of his hysterical patients at the Salpêtrière presented a much more rewarding field of study, and Richet returned to his physiology and other types of psychic phenomena. Of the others, history does not tell.

Janet himself wrote, in 1925, by which time most standard texts on hypnotism no longer bothered to mention the telepathic aspects at all, "Such a decadence, so rapid a disappearance after such high enthusiasm and such extensive developments is certainly surprising." He confessed that he could no longer quite understand how he came to get the results he had reported in 1886. And although he did not flatly disavow what he had reported in good faith at the time, it's clear that inwardly he had the greatest difficulty believing that such things had happened. It was like a dim and distant dream, or a childhood memory which was no longer trustworthy. Very interesting. In addition, whole other lines of experiments that showed really powerful, clear psychic effects were abandoned.

Now I may be guilty of that myself. I'm not quite sure. I have many rationalizations as to why I never followed up certain lines of experiments, but years ago I came up with a technique for training psychic abilities that I thought was very powerful, got some extremely good initial promising results, but somehow came up with a number of reasons why there were other things that were more important to study. They were good reasons, but sometimes I wonder, "Why didn't I at least train *myself* with these same techniques? Oh well, I'm into evolving "wisdom," I don't need psychic abilities, yes, yes, yes". . . Sure! Right!

Parapsychologists are a funny lot. Although I haven't attended in the last few years, for 20 years or more I went to conventions of the Parapsychological Association, which is one of the scientific bodies in this field. Over the years I noticed a very interesting phenomena that I named "The Religion of the .05 Level." If a parapsychologist presented an experimental study that involved some kind of repeating guessing, and the results were reported to be statisti-

cally significant, you would know that they would occur by chance alone less than five times out of a hundred. There might be some criticisms of the methodology, but generally not. I mean, things were vetted by the Association's program committee first.

But you can get statistical significance while being trivial. If somebody's guessing red or black on a deck of cards where they should average 50%, and they average 50.5% over a long period of time, that can be very statistically significant, but it means you are simply *guessing* 99.5% of the time. It's only once in a great while that anything psychic happens. That's intellectually stimulating, for parapsychologists, but it doesn't really bring much psi home to you, make it *real*.

On the other hand, when somebody would occasionally present a paper with *massive* amounts of ESP, the amount and intensity of methodological criticism would be astounding. In fact, parapsychologists are the severest critics of other parapsychologists who get strong psychic results in the laboratory. Very interesting. Why would that be? Rationally you'd think "Oh wow, somebody at last is managing to get good, reliable, strong results which will really advance the whole field." On the contrary, criticism is tremendous, and people very seldom follow up that line of research.

Something like that happened to me. Going back to the technique I came up with for trying to train psychic abilities: It started when I began thinking about the typical multiple-choice guessing tests that were used in much of parapsychological research, and are still used in many cases.^{3,7} The subject guesses at the order of a deck of cards in another room, for instance, and not until the end is told what the score is. That's necessary in that situation because it would change the statistics if you knew what was already used from the deck as you went along.

So I proposed that when you give people lots of trials with no feedback as to how they're doing, psychologically it's an *extinction* paradigm. It's how you can take any skill people have, confuse them, and eventually destroy their ability to do it. It would be like if you were put in a car blindfolded, in an insulated suit so you couldn't hear or feel anything from the environment, and given 25 five-minute trials and at the end were told that you had three accidents. You'd like to avoid accidents. Right? But, how can you learn anything? There's no

immediate feedback. It's not like "Lift this glass of water," which is a mild variation on a highly learned action. In order to *learn* something you have to try, *and then see what happens*. You learn through feedback, you know. For instance, I'll try furrowing my brow in order to become psychic. Oops, I got it wrong. I guess furrowing my brow doesn't help. Let's try something more profound, or something, etc., etc.

But I also said there's an inherent problem in with any kind of multiple choice test. Namely, you're right a certain amount of the time *by chance alone*. If people were guessing red or black on cards they were right 50% of the time by chance alone. So whatever *experiential* associations you have, half the time they don't really tell you anything about what it feels like to genuinely use psychic powers. Instead, you get confusion. So I said, "You know, because there's a certain amount of confusion built into multiple choice tests, you had better use subjects who are *fairly talented to begin with*, and then, with more-than-average success as feedback, they should be able to learn to get much better." And I presented some evidence to show that that's what appears to be the case.

Nevertheless, lots of people went out and replicated this, but *used people who showed no talent at all to begin with*, and found, sure enough, nobody learned anything! And therefore there was nothing to feedback learning! Which of course was one of the *predictions* of the theory. This was an expected result if you put people without psychic ability in a confusing situation. Now, the \$64 question is, why is there resistance on the part of parapsychologists to make something happen? Why didn't people test this research by using groups of subjects who fit the theory? An interesting question.

Now, all that is scientific talk, mostly about other people. But now let's get down to the personal level, where I think it really matters. How much of these considerations of fear and resistance apply to you, and you, and you, and me? Clearly, there will be big individual differences here. These considerations are going to be important for some people, but not particularly important for others. I think that to some extent fear of the paranormal is universal, however, simply because we're all members of modern society, which does not have room for psychic events and people, which teaches us that they're crazy. So, we're going to have certain problems, just by virtue of being members of Western culture. What can be done?

Well, in thinking about this I've come up with several things. We can call them theories. Two of them relate to why people might not use psychic abilities, why they might be afraid of them. In a journal article⁸ I called the first a *social-masking theory* of psychic inhibition. Part of being a normal social person means we have an implicit contract with others. Namely, "I would like to be known to you on my terms, and if you will honor them, you can be known to me on your terms." That's not perfect of course, because we see all sorts of things about other people they'd rather we didn't see, and the like, and we expose things about ourselves we don't want to.

We like to be in control of our impressions, sight, sound, taste, smell, etc., and we're pretty good at doing that. That's why we use massive amounts of deodorant. We want to be able to control that particular signal. Right? In some sense, when you greet a friend, you should smell each other's armpits and see how you're feeling! Oh, you'd learn a lot that way, We are conditioned, of course, to think how gross, what an awful thing to do! Incidentally, we won't have an experiential session on that, because you've all used your deodorant this morning and that tends to mask things. The experiment is already flawed.

So the implicit social contract calls for not knowing each other too well. It's sort of like, "I'll support your illusions if you'll support mine." We're good at doing that. We uphold our own self-image because there are things we don't want to know about ourselves. And having other people uphold our illusions helps us have our own defenses. We give each other strokes for doing that sort of thing. Besides, how would you sell your used car if we had really strongly functioning psi in general? So, there are lots of social pressures that we don't even see. It was built into us so long ago that *we just don't think about certain kinds of things or do certain kinds of things*. It's not as if you get up in the morning and have to remind yourself, "I will not be psychic today. I will behave." It happens automatically. It might be an interesting experiential exercise, though, to say that to yourself a few mornings in a row, keeping it in mind and seeing what happens.

So there's a *social masking theory*, for not showing much psi, and why we may be afraid of it. There's a deeper level of psychological theorizing that I've come up with, though. I call it the *primal conflict theory* of psi inhibition. I can't

prove the following, but I think it's very likely. And lots of mothers will say, "Why do you have to prove it, it's obvious?" I think it's likely that infants and mothers have a great deal of telepathic communication starting sometime while the baby is still in the womb. It's obviously not *word* communication, the baby doesn't say, "Hi, Mom! How's the weather today?" or something like that. But there's a *feeling* communication. And I think this is perfectly natural, it's a kind of psychic bond that persists for some time after birth, perhaps up to a period of years. I don't even have to give you examples of it, you know about that kind of a thing.

But, we grow up in a society that has rules about how we are *supposed* to perceive the world, what we are *supposed* to believe about it, how we are *supposed* to think, how we are *supposed* to feel, how we are *supposed* to behave. Consequently, I believe, this primal kind of telepathic link causes great problems between mothers and young kids. Particularly because for the last few generations it's been quite clear that all you moms have to be "supermoms." It has been said that you are totally responsible for the mental health of your child. So you must be a *perfect* mother, and certainly not make any of the mistakes that *your* parents made. Do I touch a resonant chord there? So you've got to be good.

But eventually there are days when little Johnny does outrageous things. You know, break your favorite vase, create these terrible messes, scream at you when you have a headache, and all that, and your primary biological instinct might be, "I'd like to strangle the little bastard!" But you're Supermom! You're Supermom! What a bind! You try not to acknowledge this destructive thought, if possible. And you certainly don't act on it. And you tell little Johnny, with understanding, "Now Johnny, you should be considerate of other people's belongings and not play carelessly, and I may have to spank you to remind you of this but it's for your own good." But on the psychic channel, little Johnny is getting the message, "I want to kill this kid!"

Now, if you remember back to childhood, conflicts tend to be all-or-none kinds of things and incredibly intense, and kids are getting this double message. On the conscious level, the level of social acceptability that they *must* buy into, mommy's not really angry, she's being considerate, and what not. But on the unconscious level, this primal, emotional level, it is awful, mommy wants to kill me.

Obviously, I'm simplifying a little bit; but this primal conflict is hard to handle. So I've postulated that basically there's a general repression of psychic abilities, to shut off that channel so it never comes through consciously, and then the conflict disappears. Now this is not ultimately healthy, because repression *per se* is not a healthy defense mechanism. You cut out part of reality. But I think *primal conflict repression accounts for a general lack of psychic functioning in our society*, and it also may explain some of the intense levels of resistance you get to the appearance of psychic abilities. For example, somebody will argue with you terribly heatedly about the trivial points of methodological design in some psi experiment. Why so much intensity? Maybe at some level the unconscious mind says, "To seriously look at telepathy is to remember that mommy hated me, and that's totally unacceptable." As conscious reasoning, that's stupid, of course. But the unconscious can *easily* put things like this together. There's no research to flesh out this theory, but I suspect it's part of the picture.

I'll give you one more theory relevant to fear of psi. I haven't developed this much yet. Maybe we can develop it further in the question period. You might call it *repression of our spiritual self*. From my point of view, we're basically spiritual beings, and we're here in this very interesting spiritual school. But the particular classroom we're in says, "Baloney! Spiritual, shmiritual! The spiritual idea is a delusion of weak-minded people who can't accept scientific materialism." And don't forget, most people have spiritual disappointments. Remember the time you prayed to God as a child, "If you'll save Mommy from dying, I'll be good," and Mommy dies. Well, you might develop a hell-with-you-God kind of attitude! It's easy to get these intense reactions, and deny our spiritual self. To deny a spiritual Self is a way to not have to live with the conflicts of disappointment, cultural disapproval, for being "spiritual," and so forth. And that's why I think we get militant atheism sometimes, militant denial of spirit. There's a lot of psychological pressure underneath. And, even worse, suppose that spiritual stuff is true, that I'm supposed to make something of my life, and I've just been having fun, have been kicking ass because I'm getting ahead and making money. Well, "There's nothing to that spiritual stuff anyway, so I've got nothing to worry about." The idea of opening to the psychic stuff, which maybe starts opening to the spiritual, threatens to raise these kinds of conflicts. So repression of our "higher selves," our spiritual selves, may be a very real factor here.

Now, I've come to an interesting junction point. I have a few more words on fear of psi but I'm tempted to not give closure now, since I've time later, on a panel, in which to deal with fear of psi. So let's leave this at the agitated stage. We might then have a more interesting discussion period. If something has been riled up, it may be even a little bit experiential.

LATER

I found, talking at lunch, that I succeeded in stirring up a lot of angst, that's good. It's the talking about it that can begin something. Let me just briefly tell you some methods, I've got eleven of them listed here, for dealing with fears of psychic material.⁹

Five of these methods aren't completely satisfactory because they have a pathological element, or there's some kind of high psychological cost. The other six are healthier. One of the five, and a very popular one, of dealing with fear of psi is to simply *deny that psi exists*. "It does not exist, therefore, I am not afraid of it." But, you know, since you're cutting yourself off from reality, you are going to pay a price. Or a slight variant of that is *to accept psi but deny that you're afraid of it*, even though you actually are. Denial though doesn't really work.

The second very common method, if you have some psi fear, is *stay away from situations that might trigger it*. That's hard for us in this room because we're involved in the field. Some people, however, are very good at it. For instance, the many scientists who are prominent *pseudo-skeptics* can claim quite genuinely they've never seen any evidence that convinces them of the existence of psi. And they haven't wasted their time looking for it, either.

Another way of avoiding circumstances that trigger your fear of psi, a technique used by quite a few parapsychologists, is to zealously *practice the religion of the .05 level*. You design your experiments in such a way that intellectually, through statistical analysis, it says some psi happened but it's of such a low magnitude that it doesn't ever really get through to you. Let me make that concrete. I did some studies years ago in which people were using a 10-choice trainer, where they had 10 possibilities on each try. And obviously, you don't get many

hits by chance on that. You get one out of ten on the average, and if anyone could average one-and-a-half or twos, they were outstanding. I had a woman who started in this training procedure, getting better, and better, finally averaging four and five. She then broke into tears and quit the study. It was no longer, "The professor says that through some intellectual analysis there's something psychic going on here." It was *real*. That crossed the gut-level reality threshold and triggered her psi-fear problem, which wasn't resolved.

Another common way of dealing with fear is by *rationalization*. For instance, a person might say, "No, no, all this psychic stuff comes from the higher realms of the spirit and is only good." Now that might be true. But it's an evasion and rationalization if you don't really know that. You're just investing in that idea in order to sweep any frightening aspects of psi under the table. All of these evasions, of course, have a high price.

Then there's the *distraction* way of dealing with fear of psi. Some parapsychologists do this by becoming so obsessed with the technical details of their experiments and methodologies that they never notice that something is actually happening. It's a common professional path. One becomes a better and better methodologist and never actually finishes doing any experiments because all the time you're too busy improving the procedure.

Then there is the *dissociation* way of defending yourself against fear of psi. "I don't do it, I just channel the spirits. I'm not psychic, it's in the cards, it's in the tea leaves, it's in the horoscope, it's in the readings of the aura meter," or something like that. It's a manifestation of what Kenneth Batchelor, the late parapsychologist, called *ownership resistance*. You don't own up to it. You act as if you didn't have anything to do with it. You falsely project into the system, "It's not me, it's this psychic machine," or something like that. There may be something in some systems which has an independent psi function, though I've never seen evidence of it, but it's quite clear that systems sometimes give people permission to use their own psychic abilities. If you want to go deeper into the matter, you have to look into what you yourself are doing, including looking at your own fears.

Now all of these methods I've mentioned so far are unhealthy in the sense that they deny aspects of reality. They avoid really looking at the most fearful stuff.

So let's talk about healthier ones. The first is what we might call *desensitization* ways of dealing with psi. You just keep rubbing your nose in it over and over until it doesn't seem so fearful. This is something we do in many aspects of life. Something frightens us, but we keep doing it because we have to, and after awhile we don't notice the fear. We say we're desensitized. In certain respects that's quite healthy. Sometimes, though, it's a way of again covering the real problem, and just getting used to something so you don't have to admit that there's a problem.

Another way of dealing with fear is through the use of what I call *bypass defenses*. You bypass your fear of psi rather than dealing with it. Some of Batchelor's research was excellent on this.¹⁰ He got people involved in old-fashioned, Victorian table-tipping situations in a dark room, with everybody around the table. The table was instrumented so that it might detect genuine psi effects. But since a group was involved, a person could say, "It wasn't me, it was the other people, who probably cheated. You know, maybe it was psi, or maybe the other people pushed on the table," or something like that. You spread the blame out and don't have to deal with it yourself.

But now the really healthy ways get down to cognitive and affective acknowledgment where you can say, "I personally have such-and-such a specific fear about psychic stuff or energy stuff." And I emphasize that this has to be emotional, affective, not just cognitive. That admission process actually handles some fears of psi in and of itself. A lot of fears operate in a grossly exaggerated fashion simply because we won't admit that they are a fear, but once they are brought into the light of consciousness, they change. "Oh! OK, what I was really afraid of was being afraid."

That, though, doesn't handle *all* of the fears of psychic phenomena. Some have to be looked at in a much more specific fashion. But that first step of cognitively and affectively acknowledging fear, and then doing that same thing with other people, essentially joining the human race and admitting to other people you have some fears, is very effective. You must use discretion in who you talk to, of course, but that method can take a tremendous load off people. And as the pressure decreases, you can look more specifically at what the fears are. Sometimes the insights alone enable you to then cope with them.

Next to the last method of handling fear is *learning adaptive coping skills*. That is, if you have a specific kind of fear, once you've acknowledged it, play with it. Try doing this or that. Does it get worse or better? Does it give you insight into it, or does it just panic you in such a way that you can't see what you're doing? Admit that it bothers you. It may seem dangerous from your perspective, but play with it.

The analogy that I use here is gun safety. Guns can be handled safely if you're trained in the fact that yes, they *always* are dangerous. You never assume they're unloaded. You never point a gun at somebody unless you intend to shoot them, and hopefully you don't intend that. If you take that attitude, you don't get careless. Lots of people have never had an accident with a gun in their life, while remembering that a gun is dangerous. If you have an attitude toward psi that it is dangerous in some respect, you can stay aware of that attitude and experiment with strategies of nevertheless working with it in some way that minimizes the danger without being unrealistically careless.

I mentioned earlier the need for accepting responsibility for your fear of psi. We must also accept responsibility for the *power* aspects of psi. We haven't talked about that. But in much of the world down through the ages people wanted to learn psychic abilities in order to have power over other people. That possibility does seem to exist, even though I personally might hope that it's a delusion, and let myself believe that psi fear depends only on *mood*, that psi can't possibly be used for anything negative. But, I don't know of anything else in life that works that way, so I'm staying open on that. But if you accept the fact that yes, maybe I could develop my psi and hurt those nasty people, who deserve to be hurt anyway because they're sinners and deserve it, and you realize those feelings in yourself by knowing them, you're not going to be carried away by them. They're not going to come out in subtle ways that actually end up hurting people.

And finally, the ultimate way of dealing with your own fear of psychic abilities is *personal and spiritual growth*. Anything and everything you do that lets you know yourself better, that integrates you better, that makes you less rigid and more open, that makes you more compassionate, that puts you in more of a spiritual relationship to the higher aspects of the universe, will at least in an indirect way deal with the fear of psi. I haven't time to elaborate on that. It's a whole field to be considered.

To conclude: I've opened up a can of worms in some ways by bringing up this material about fear, but it needs to be opened. These fears, when they're in the unconscious, have us totally under control. They influence and distort our actions and perceptions in ways that we don't realize, and we sabotage our own work.

I'll give one example of sabotage that has always struck me as remarkable, and that's the laboratory discovery—this would have never been discovered in ordinary life, it could only have come up in the laboratory—of *psi missing*. People who believe there's no such thing as ESP were given laboratory tests and showed a tendency to score significantly *below chance*. Now, that's because they had been schooled in the Western educational system, so they think a test measures what you know. Don't let out the secret that that's not true. OK? But since we all believe that, they say to themselves, "Well, there's no ESP. They're giving me an ESP test. I got a lousy score. That *proves* there's no such thing as ESP." They don't realize that *being significantly below chance is just as significant as being above it*. These people are unconsciously using psychic abilities to find out what the correct answer is, so they can be certain to make an error. Unconsciously, we can use "miraculous" abilities to prove there are no such things as "miraculous" abilities. I'm absolutely amazed at the ingenuity of the human mind in upholding its delusions! We have to face these things, otherwise they will continue to undermine the field in various ways, both in terms of our own efforts as well as the reactions of other people.^{11,12}

So, I've emphasized the negative. But really, I'm not that kind of a person. I don't like to emphasize the negative. The *big context* for me is that we're here in this body, and we are also "something" spiritual. I don't want to put names on it, but *we're here*, and there's lots of adventure and pleasure here, and there's lots of suffering. But mainly there's a tremendous opportunity to learn. Somehow, if we work it right, we can grow in compassion and wisdom. The analogy I like, that I got from somewhere, is that this world is a spiritual training school. When you don't have a physical body you may have a lot of freedom, but it's indefinite and loose. Down here you get focussed. So this is a training course. This is like the Marine Corps. Right? It's a tough course, but if you pass it, you really learn how to focus yourself.

So, I'm very optimistic about life and psi. I don't have any final answers on this topic of fear, but if you've thought about it, as several people at this confer-

ence have, you've probably seen something in yourself, have had some insights. If you continue to look inside when psi situations get that odd feeling to them, I'll be very pleased. And I think the field will move on. Thank you.

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Audience Questions after "Fears of Paranormal" Lecture

Q: Good morning. I have been a professional psychic for 18 years, and I just want to acknowledge the compactness that you had this morning in describing the psi fears and awareness, what it's like to be in that situation. It is very uncomfortable at many times. I also want to say that I've studied the chakra theory and energy movement through the system, and that when people come for that particular work, the body can be "scanned" to reveal difficulties and discords. Many times when they get up to the third eye, especially with the fourth chakra and the third eye, when they start to try to balance the energy, people seem to go into shock. And then, after that energy starts to move, they may recall spontaneously many of the things that they saw as children. I just wanted to pass it on to the people doing "energy work" that when their client starts to move and thrust, it's possible to go with them through that. But if you have fear of your own psychic stuff, or your own energy is coming back up from your own blockage as a child, it's difficult to go in and dance with them to that music. When you're okay with your own psychic stuff it gets a lot clearer. So I've taken my wound and turned it into a positive aspect. I'm still working, I still want to go farther with what I have, but I just wanted to share that with the group. It's important to open that door, as you said.

A: Thank you. It reminds me of a story I heard from Raymond Moody about a Christian whose faith was faltering. He'd been praying for a long time for a sign to make his faith more real. He worked as a telephone lineman and one day he was struck by lightning as he was up on a pole, and had a great near-death experience. After that his prayers to God were always: "And thank you for that sign, God. Thank you so much. But that's enough, thank you. I don't need any more!" I understand the feeling very well.

Q: I have a similar comment. I have a center where we do scientific research and also work with the esoteric energies. I have found that when we awaken these latent abilities and open up the energies, we begin to see that it is essential that we heal ourselves. In my school and also in the Barbara Brennan school, there's a huge focus for healing our own wounds and realizing our divine self. And in my personal experience, when my third eye began to open and I was doing psychic healings long-distance, and was doing it in the old paradigm of the rescuer. . . [unclear]. . . But I made the bridge when I started to do

my deep personal work. . . I came to a point where, when I understood and accepted myself, and felt that I understood the divine, my fears totally went away. Now, when I work with a client, it is not “me” that is doing the work. I have the ability now to put my ego and prejudice on the shelf and stand in the light and be with that being. And when they start to shake—I had one man that I thought was having a heart attack on the table, and I’m not medically trained, and I asked my spirit guides what to do and they guided me through this. He did not have a heart attack, but he had such an awakening and a physical and mental healing that I stood in that trust. I guess what I’m saying is, the fear leaves when you do your work.

A: These are good illustrations of why our colleagues treat us “funny.” This is heavy stuff, thank you.

Q: *Charles, I want to thank you publicly. I heard you speak one time earlier, and you spoke in reference to your book Waking Up.¹³ You said that anytime someone speaks, in mid-sentence they might pause and see the effect of what they’re saying not only on the person in front of them but on themselves as they speak. I want to tell you that that has tremendously enhanced my ability to be more sensitive. I use myself as a resonator with people and I wanted to acknowledge the gift. . . you’ve given us. That simple exercise has really tremendously changed my life. I probably wouldn’t otherwise have the comfort to stand here and speak before an audience.*

A: Well thank you. If you found that useful I might also let you know I have a new book on mindfulness coming out called *Living the Mindful Life*,¹⁴ from Shambhala Press. Same stuff, but in a different form. I mean, what is there to talk about but being “present,” though the forms vary. Thank you.

Q: *I have an ambivalence which I would like you to address. I might make it worse. I’ll try to handle the dissonance but that might help articulate it. I had what I call [an] expanded awareness experience in 1974. A friend very beautifully said, “You’re the same person, but there’s more of you.” And there was definitely too much of me for the man I used to be married to. . . Now, there’s an ambivalence in me. I like the fullness of being aware in all the ways that you talk about, but I don’t like having to dampen down and be less than that. So there’s a tremendous ambivalence. I think that’s especially true in this culture today. So as I grow in my sensitivities and awareness, I enjoy experiencing and living that, but there seems to be an ambivalence in society towards us who have some of these abilities. I think I’m still working on mine certainly to develop them. So I’m wondering if you can give a reading on your perception of society, because I see a double reaction. I see groups in society like this who really want to grow and open, and I feel a whole other force that’s trying to shrink our ability to be our full selves. I wish you could give some comments on society at this time, and about our place in it.*

A: Let me give two levels of comments here. But, first, prior to that, I'm very pleased about what people have been saying, sharing their own problems with fears here, because all of you realize, I'm sure, that one of the ways we can deal with fears is by sharing them with other people. The courage to admit to other people that I'm afraid, was very hard for me the first time. Hey, I'm tough! Right? "Me, have fears?" It makes you more human when you can admit to them, and share them, and talk about them with other people. Somehow, fear then doesn't have you so hard. You've got more room to maneuver, you can deal with it in a clearer kind of way.

On the social level, of course there will always be extremes. There will be people trying to close things down out of fear, or greed, or something, and others trying to open up. Extreme people at both ends, that will always be the case. I don't really know how to deal with extremes, but what we can try to do is establish something solid in the middle. If somebody says, "I'm enlightened" and puts on a funny turban and walks down the street trying to convert people, we either give them money or lock them up, or something like that. That's an extreme that doesn't work. But as we spiritually grow, if we can manifest that growth not in flashy ways but in the quality of the way we interact with people, then people say, "Well, that person really paid attention to me," or, "There's a calmness there I'd like to know more about—let me ask," or something like that. I think we can establish the foundations for slow but steady spiritual evolution. Brilliant flashes in both directions won't really do. It's that slow *change of being*, rather than just having experiences, or wonderful altered states of consciousness, that's going to make it in the end. It's not easy, and sometimes that does mean being less than full. But think of it this way—sometimes when I play with my granddaughter she wants me to play a little rough. She's learning something, but I don't manifest my full being. We all have to do that. We adjust ourselves, trying to be authentic, but yet adapting to the person we're working with.

Q: I'd like to say I honor your work on fear. It's tough to deal with. And I'd like to say I started working with intensive meditation when I was very, very young and didn't really understand what I was doing. After a number of years the effects were so profound that I dropped it and made a conscious effort to close the process down. I was afraid I was going to lose my soul, or leave my body and never be able to return, or something like that. It was only through my education, going on through psychology and building my dialectic ability, that I really gained the tool chest that was necessary. So it's been ten years, and I can now open up the box that I stuck in the closet labeled "spirituality" and taped up really tight. That's from building those tool chests. . . . And now I'm finding that I can return to practices that I dropped a long time ago, with understanding. Your earlier works laid the foundations for me to be able to deal with it logically and say "Well, this fear is irrational."

A: I would second and third that idea about being educated and rational as well as psychic. Lots of you remember the Carlos Castaneda books—really far-out, weird mystical stuff. But there is a theme going through there that most people miss, and that is Don Juan would really appreciate it if Carlos would learn to be genuinely rational *when rationality was appropriate*. The ability to think logically, to take a distant position, to observe the whole thing, is an incredible human ability, but we distort it badly. *Most of what we call rationality is actually rationalization based on emotional underpinnings we're not facing*. I've always thought, along with Gurdjieff, that we have to develop our *emotional* brain's intelligence as well as our *rational* brain's intelligence and our *body* brain, and not confuse them.

Going to college, you know, when you have had too much psychic experience when you're younger, that makes sense. In fact, it reminds me of one of the books by a person who's supposed to be—see, there's my scientific caution coming in—one of Don Juan's students in that mystical school. They sent her to college after she had lots of amazing psychic experiences so she could learn how to use the rational part of her mind. That was an essential part of her training. That was my point when I spoke earlier about the rational part of all this. If you're doing experiments, do them really well. I mean that as a *spiritual* discipline, not simply as a way of trying to get more acceptance with the establishment. Genuine science, genuine rationality is a great discipline. If you know when to pick it up and use it. And when it's reached its limit, know enough to put it down, to use something else, and not be confused about what you're doing, that's a happy state.

Q: As I listened to you this morning, I thought, "Now there's a man after my own heart." Until you said you hold back, and talked about tussling with your granddaughter. My feeling is that if the blacks in America had taken the stance of there's no them and us they'd still be cleaning the toilets and we'd still be eating in the dining rooms that they had cleaned for us. There is a point here. I don't believe in them and us. I'm actually hoping to be employed by Rush Medical Assistance to teach medical students. But, at the same time, the political reality is there is a psi apartheid. And there is an internalized psi phobia if we say, "That's okay, we love the people who have the power." All your figures say the money we get for psi from our taxes is pathetic. We have to stand up and say, "I'm a child of the universe just as much as the people who control the purse-strings. I have a right to this." My interest in what you said is that it shows clearly that data alone is not sufficient. Don't get me wrong, data is necessary. But if we think it's sufficient, we kid ourselves.

This organization needs members. This organization may not be able to be politically active, but the members should recognize that there is an apartheid, and that we have to come out of the closet and stand up and speak for ourselves and discover the things like

what Eisenburg's figures [on alternative medicine] show. We're a silent majority, we're not a minority. You can't have 34% of the country using these services, without [having] political clout if they came out of the closet. None of these people who use these services will talk about using them because they're frightened that their friends will think they're pathetic. It's time for us to get up and say, "It's not pathetic, it works. We don't understand the theory behind it, but it works."

All I'm trying to do is say, Don't kid yourselves about what it takes to make the shift. The shifts we've seen so far are political shifts, not because of the data. We couldn't have succeeded without the data, but let's get our stance right so we're not kidding ourselves and really [trying to stay] comfortable with our internalized psi phobias. It's David fighting Goliath, it's not you with your granddaughter. That's the reality.

A: Yes, political power is an important part of things. Here's a provocative comment: I may wish to say we're here, with an organization like this, because the sheer buildup of wonderful data convinced people. But actually, we're here because the sons and daughters of a lot of influential people dropped acid in the sixties. We're here because cultural shifts created a bigger niche for us. There are times when we have to stand up and get very active about this. I mean, I like spiritual people who are very loving and all that, but there's a certain kind of pathology of, you know, "Stomp all over me because I'm so sweet and enlightened."

Q: *I'm grateful for this group as a family that is willing to begin to stand up. As I walked up the line of questioners my question changed ten times. There's a metaphor, first of all, that has been bubbling up from me and that's this thing about a caterpillar that believes it's a butterfly already. I believe [that in society] we've got a cultural caterpillar. . . How do we on the butterfly side communicate to the caterpillar that thinks it has already arrived, that there's a [metamorphosis]—and that's a political question for me, a social question, how do we really do that? I think that's a question we've got to address. And that's the issue of the denial ethic, the ethic of denial, that. . . is so prevalent, even in ourselves. I know it's in myself, and that's what you were talking about. How do we release that in such a way that it's safe?*

I'm very, very aware today of the whole O.J. phenomenon, not just O.J., but as a cultural symbol, a cultural myth. Here's someone who has to be public, who has to be out there, who has to be fully a particular image, and that's not just O.J. I see that everywhere. That image is shattering in some way because we haven't embraced the shadow side of ourselves. And then we jump on one side or another saying. . . he did it, or he didn't do it. But that's not the question. The question is what happens to the psyche in all of us that causes us to repress and then it breaks out. And everywhere it's breaking out. The

whole myth is breaking apart and we're here with a response to that in some way. How can we step into that response fully? I don't know how to do that. But that's what I'm asking.

A: The only place we can start, of course, is with ourselves. If we try to improve others without dealing with the things in ourselves first, it's a weak foundation. Now I'm not saying we should all go off and meditate in caves for forty years before we dare lift a little finger. These processes have to go together. I know for myself it was necessary. It was very hard for me, but I had to accept the fact that there's a part of me that loves violence—would love to be really violent and hurt people and be powerful. And having admitted that, it doesn't come out sneakily. And I know what I'm doing most of the time—I hope. But, you know, as long as I wanted to think I'm such a good person, I don't believe in violence, I noticed some odd unpleasant things would happen to *other* people around me. So, yes, we have to work with others, but work with ourselves also.

Q: Thanks to Ranjan I feel like I'm in a Psychics Anonymous meeting and I'm about to confess. A little story. My awareness came fairly quickly. I had a blow to the head and broke my neck and about four weeks later I heard some voices talking to me. And as a psychiatrist, this was not consistent with what I knew. In fact, I made a DSM-III diagnosis for myself and didn't tell anybody. But the little voice was very clear. It wasn't an impression. It said, "Well, okay, who's your psychiatrist, who are you going to get to treat you. What's the medication, how do you know when you're going to get better?" It went through, you know, "Are you functioning occupationally, socially? Yes? Well, then you're not crazy."

No, but I'm moving my lips and I'm talking to somebody who's not there. Right? "That's right, you're not." So, I got used to it. And I realized I wasn't crazy and we became great friends. . . We're good buds now and I just want to say that part of it was the fear that I was going nuts, really, and asking, "Well how do I know you're not going to control me? How do I know I'm not going to lose me?" Because I'm thinking, "Well, if you're going to impress your mind into my mind. . ." And so we had some discussions about that and the upshot of it seems to be, "We have our own mind, we don't want your little mind." So don't worry about taking over your mind. They've got a mind, it's much smarter than your mind. And they're doing their little job, guiding you along, but please, they don't want your tiny little mind. They have plenty of minds of their own. So, don't sweat it. Thank you very much.

A: How old are you, brother? Well, I would like to give everyone a homework assignment. Think about our fears of what we've just heard, and talk about it with other

people at lunch. And if you do that, we'll have an interesting panel discussion. Because, you know, there's lots of other perspectives going to be brought in, too, on this same topic.

Q: I wanted to acknowledge your comments about babies and children and their abilities, psychic abilities. And I would want to acknowledge that 1.7 million children are battered in our nation and 54% of them are babies under one year of age. But also, notice that there are real [psychic] phenomena occurring regarding babies. Just two real quick comments: Fathers who hold mothers' breasts during the birthing process say that the breasts put out a very strong and palpable energy that can be felt and perceived, and that babies have the capacity or power when laid upon the mother's belly, to crawl their way to the breast as if the breasts are calling the baby. And, studies show that when little babies are looking at their mothers that they are not looking at their mother's eyes, but at their mother's third eye, which I thought was an interesting thing. So that's another rich field of taking innocents who are being fully human before all of this cultural closure occurs, to see what we really are like.

A: Interesting. Okay, one last question and then "authority" is cutting us off.

Q: Thank you. You have helped us to generate a wonderful list of fears. They resonated very well in my own life. It made me wonder why it was possible to know anything about this realm of experience, given how many things there were to fear about it. The loss of boundaries, going crazy, the disapproval. The one I would like to speak to here, I guess, is in the moral area, because I found myself come up against it. Two examples: A client of mine found that she was going out after our sessions and eating foods that she knew were terrible for her to eat, that left her feeling very spacey. And as we unraveled this we discovered that she was trying to get away from the enhancement of her awareness that was occurring in the sessions. And then she revealed that, on two different occasions, she had had a perception that someone she had encountered was going to die soon, and they did. And she found the burden of responsibility to know these kinds of things overwhelming and really wanted to escape it. Much of the destructive behavior in her life seemed to revolve around this attempt to escape.

Secondly, in my practice, a client of mine who just by coincidence is a very prominent biomedical researcher suddenly developed a pancreatic cancer. And faced with the prospect of either having to do something, or not see this person in a couple months, I winged it and did visualization meditation, negotiating with his tumor. And in a way that we both found rather extraordinary, it shrunk down to a size that allowed it to be operated on and taken out. Now, at the end of this experience, as he was beginning to recover, we talked with each other about the possibility of together writing up an article about it. I knew as

I was talking about it with him, I knew that we weren't going to do this, that we wanted to do this but we wouldn't. And, we haven't. We haven't pursued it. Now what this brings up for me is that there's a burden to knowing so much, to knowing the depth of life. And it's safer to deny things. To know things is to know about our possible power to do good, and then we have responsibilities that goes with that. It seems like we should be using it all the time. And the other side of it, of course, is I suppose, our power to do evil. And that whenever we tap into this realm where we know a lot more, we see evil, we see destructiveness and viciousness and cruelty and it's terribly painful. It's much easier to retreat into a world where we know much less. I struggle with that every day.

Thank you.

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