

# **HANDBOOK OF PARA- PSYCHOLOGY**

EDITED BY

**Benjamin B. Wolman**

# HANDBOOK OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY

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# HANDBOOK OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY

*To*  
**GARDNER MURPHY**  
*with affection and appreciation*

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# Introduction

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*Howard M. Zimmerman*

The "Great Books of the Western World," published by Encyclopaedia Britannica, begins with a volume entitled *The Great Conversation*—a review of the continuing dialogue among societal spokesmen, from Homer and Plato to Freud and James, whose views and thoughts have contributed so importantly to the evolution of Western culture.

It is the task of every generation to readdress the tradition in which it lives, to discard what it cannot use and to bring into context with the distant and immediate past the most recent contributions to the Great Conversation (Hutchins, 1952, Vol. 1, p. xi).

By making available in permanent form much of the most important work and thought achieved in the field of parapsychology, the editors of the *Handbook of Parapsychology* have made a valuable offering to "The Great Conversation." The contributors to this volume have brought to this dialogue the history, achievements, scope, and problems as well as the implications and issues of an emerging science. Taken together, they represent the major lines of inquiry in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding of extrasensory expression and perception among people, and between people and their environment. While some of their observations and conclusions provide *prima facie* evidence that has withstood the test of time and reason, other observations suggest that the road to understanding and the resolution of basic issues is a long and arduous one.

What are the issues that parapsychology brings to the "Great Conversation"?

From the vantage point of historical hindsight, two basic issues are clearly implicit in parapsychology and can be viewed as having guided the scientific explorations of several generations of investigators.

1. Does humankind have paranormal abilities and potentials for awareness, communication, and action that are not fully realized?
2. Do these capacities continue to function even when muscles and nerves cease to function, i.e., is there some sense in which humankind survives the experience of physical death?

Nearly a century of research had addressed and attempted to clarify these issues—with more apparent success in clarifying the former than the latter. The systematic study of spontaneous cases and experimental laboratory investigations of selected subjects (or similar studies of unselected subjects on the assumption that these abilities are universal in nature) has refined fundamental methodologies for detection and measurement. In the process, a series of subsidiary questions bearing on these issues was uncovered—questions, as reflected in this volume, that are receiving increased attention by contemporary researchers and thoughtful observers of the field.

1. What factors facilitate (or inhibit) the functioning of these paranormal abilities?
2. Can we develop them well enough so that they can be easily observed, measured, and evaluated?
3. Can we learn to use them more effectively so that they can be usefully and beneficially applied, thereby increasing or improving our well-being and the well-being of others?
4. When, and how, do we knowingly (or unknowingly) misuse them?

The basic issues are not particularly unique ones. They have been woven into the “Great Conversation” since the dawn of recorded history. In one sense, they are historically derived from prescientific classical inquiries, particularly those of philosophy and religion, which have raised similar questions from other than scientific perspectives in attempting, as Teilhard de Chardin (1965) notes, “to discover the universal hidden behind the exceptional” (p. 56). Perhaps they are also implicitly asked by most of us in the quiet embassy of personal reflection when we ponder the ultimate life questions—Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?

What is new about these issues is that they have become integrated into a scientific matrix of systematic inquiry that emphasizes the dimension of empirical observations and critical evaluation—distinct from, although often complementary to, transcendental insight and intuition—in arriving at an understanding of human nature and the world in which we live. Some of the seminal and person-

ally significant, yet anomalous, experiences of everyday life that transcend our ability for rational interpretation and explanation have slowly become amenable to the scientific method. Thus aided by empirical reference points, the subject matter of this volume is an ally to some of the deepest traditions of our culture and not only ignites scientific curiosity and inquiry, but also rekindles philosophical issues, arouses many of our long-standing questions, and stimulates our thinking on issues of both personal and societal significance.

In the Foreword to *Dream Telepathy* (Ullman and Krippner, with Vaughan, 1973) Gardner Murphy hints at the challenge of this generic significance:

Can we adapt to the experimental and quantitative requirements of the laboratory, the vast floating psychological energies of the living human mind, so complex, so challenging, so full of both inspiration and terror—as we see its conscious and unconscious expressions in civilizations and in the forces which tear civilizations apart? Can parapsychology move from the realm of the bizarre, absurd and occasionally demonic to the realm of verifiable and intelligible expressions of latent human nature? What are these hidden forces at work within us? Our seventeenth-century ancestors knew that blankets gave off sparks in cold weather. But what was electricity good for? Today, electricity drives our machines, lights our halls, monitors our studies of man, (p. xiii).

Are there seeds of extrasensory expression and perception latent in human nature that have not yet fully germinated and sprouted? If so, then a portion of our human ability is lying fallow, and the human landscape of tomorrow, given adequate nourishment, will exhibit a ripening of a more varied fruit of human abilities.

Documented by indicators from both “life and lab,” a gradual social evolution appears to be moving toward a consensual view that such abilities are more than a mere possibility. Many of the milestones leading to this view are reflected in the contributions to this volume that bring into focus paranormal or extrasensory interactions between living organisms and their environment—interactions that are not limited by time and space. Other observations have suggested that the functioning of these capacities is associated with physiological and psychological variables of some complexity, including facilitating factors of belief and a friendly relaxed interest, and inhibiting factors such as disbelief, reserve, distrust, and inhibition. More recent studies suggest that the variables which create favorable conditions for the observation and measurement of psi abilities are gradually becoming amenable to the kind of orchestration that will permit their functioning to be more easily observed, recorded, and evaluated. While little systematic effort has been devoted to studying the misuse of these latent abilities, there is universal concern among thoughtful persons about the ethical and moral milieu that will accompany any future development of these abilities. The mis-

application of new discoveries in recent history has stimulated more than one observer to comment that "perhaps they should remain largely latent until the issue as to how they will be used is no longer in doubt."

The second basic issue is equally important. Do these potentials continue to function even when muscles and nerves cease to function? Do they function as facets of something that we may view as a "surviving personality"? This question has always been a part of the "Great Conversation." The biblical query "If a man die, shall he live again?" is inherent in virtually every religious and philosophical belief system. By demonstrating that sense experience alone is not always required to discover factual information that tests the truth of general statements about the nature of things, parapsychology has provided an important interface between science, religion, and philosophy, and the beginnings of a framework within which these fields can cooperate for the mutual benefit and understanding of humankind. While a consensus on the survival question is importantly circumscribed by the researchability of the issue itself, many individuals, groups, and organizations are currently evaluating the information being obtained through parapsychological research and attempting to integrate it, from their own perspectives, with the body of knowledge attendant on a scientific, religious, or philosophical understanding of human nature. In addition, they are exploring its relationship and application to the delivery of services intended to aid the health and well-being of people.

Society has seldom spoken with one voice in considering these issues. The larger population has consistently maintained a high level of interest and belief that such experiences do occur, a belief measured in more recent times by public opinion polls and the sale of publications related to ESP. Historically, however, the scientific community has not always accorded its colleagues working in parapsychology the reception that would be conducive to nurturing the balance, dignity, and charity that these workers in parapsychology have nonetheless maintained in transforming a field of uncritical speculation into a field of vigorous scientific inquiry. Opinion surveys directed to this segment of the population have only recently begun to suggest some kind of consensus that ESP phenomena are either an established fact or a likely possibility.

This gradually narrowing gap between the general public and the scientific community has been accompanied by an increasingly widespread public and professional interest in experiences and explorations related to parapsychology. Books, articles, and media coverage of ESP and related topics have proliferated significantly in the last few years. Parapsychology is being introduced into the curriculum of a growing number of schools and colleges. In addition, several Federal agencies have participated in supporting parapsychological research, and the Smithsonian Institution is sponsoring a nation-wide showing of the first scientific exhibit of the activities and accomplishments of workers in parapsychology. These developments appear to reflect the beginnings of a gradual socializa-

tion of parapsychology and suggest, hopefully, that the distribution of public funds for support of research should more fully mirror the needs and interests of the society providing that support. A prospective speculation might expect that parapsychology will evolve to enjoy the same status and access to public support as other branches of science in the national research portfolio—a status characterized, in part, by an appreciation of the importance of the research findings and the issues involved.

A gradually broadening consensus of viewpoint and interest is perhaps influenced to some extent by the important implications of parapsychological research.

- it implies interactions between mental activity and physical processes that transcend present understanding.
- it implies modes of interaction among individuals that is stimulating revision in our thinking about the potential possibilities for human development and communication.
- it shows that the kinds of communication channels assumed by religious belief systems are at least available.
- it suggests the researchability of the question of continued existence of human personality after physical death.

During the century-long history of parapsychology and psychical research, these issues and their implications, as indicated elsewhere in this volume, have occasionally provided an arena where the dynamics of critical discussion generated more heat than light. This dynamic may be helpfully viewed from within the perspective expressed by Thomas Kuhn, a philosopher of science. In the *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) Kuhn advances the idea that scientific progress ebbs and flows within a theoretical framework or “paradigm” that identifies the limits and boundaries for acceptable scientific inquiry. The question and answer dialogue between scientist and nature is importantly circumscribed by the limits of this paradigm. The pre-Copernican model of the sun revolving around the earth was consistent with the existing paradigm, while the observations supporting the Copernican model of the earth revolving around the sun exceeded accepted limits. While observations that conflict with established paradigms are seldom made or reported, when such anomalies do occur and are reported, they are first ignored, then disputed, and are eventually articulated as a shared group of assumptions by a minority of adherents. The result is a “paradigm clash.” As an outcome of the “clash,” the old will suppress the new into extinction or to an underground existence, or will somehow accommodate the new and make it fit. Or, alternatively as a basis for future progress, a search is made for new models which will fit all, not just some of the data.

While the outcome of the paradigm clash created by the findings of parapsychology is yet to be determined, the dynamic nature of the confrontation

was described 50 years ago by William McDougall. In *A Plea For Psychical Research* (in Van Over and Oteri, 1967), he identified the dichotomy of opposing viewpoints between the leaders of scientific orthodoxy and “practically all the rest of mankind” who believed that the issues inherent in parapsychology (then called psychical research) were still an open question and that further investigation was needed to resolve the issues. As a solution he suggested that psychical research should be adequately supported financially by organized science for 50 years in a concentrated and sustained effort to settle the issues involved:

If [organized science] would support psychical research freely and unreservedly then every type of the alleged supernormal phenomena could be investigated adequately and evaluated critically. And if after fifty years of psychical research thus supported and cultivated, no such evidence should be found to have withstood the application of scientific method, then at last, science will be able to maintain with justice the attitude which at present it assumes dogmatically and uncritically (p. 41).

Although this injunction for unreserved support and cultivation was unfortunately not fulfilled, much additional evidence has been found, and the issues involved remain as an integral part of the “Great Conversation.” They have again been joined in a contemporary segment of that dialogue in both a prominent scientific journal and in the news media.

An editorial opinion in *Nature* (1974) accompanied publication of an experimental report by two Stanford Research Institute scientists “where the claim is made that information can be transferred by some channel whose characteristics apparently fall ‘outside the range of known perceptual modalities.’ Or, more bluntly, some people can read thoughts and see things remotely.” Perhaps recognizing that important issues are not resolved in the dark crypts of social concealment, the editors cited both positive and negative factors leading to the decision to publish the report, hoping to “stimulate and advance the controversy rather than keep it out of circulation for a further period.” Believing that publication would create a “stir” in the scientific community, the editorial noted that publication was not intended as an indication of endorsement by the “establishment” but “rather, it is a serving of notice on the [scientific] community that there is something worthy of their attention and scrutiny” (pp. 559–560).

A “stir” was also created in the world of scientific journalism. A subsequent *New York Times* editorial (November 4, 1974), citing the publication in *Nature*, added the observation that scientific orthodoxy is becoming “increasingly remote from the interest and beliefs of a generation of Americans as well as long neglected thinkers from early in the century.”

This volume is intended to help reduce that “remoteness” and to provide a systematic framework within which “attention and scrutiny” can be pursued. We are often reminded that there is virtually no area of contemporary life where our knowledge is adequate to the challenges we face. While parapsychology is

not a scientific panacea for any of the world's challenges and problems, it does show promise for providing some illumination for our collective obscurity. If, as I believe, present trends harbor long-term values, the findings of parapsychology, in the future, will be more broadly examined in relation to their importance to fundamental issues—both basic and applied—rather than as patterns of anomaly, statistical artifact, delusion, or accident. We will then bring out of the shadows of neglect potentials to which humankind may well be prone. And we will be constrained to look at processes of learning, coping, and adaptation rather than avoidance and indifference.

The "Great Conversation" is a continuing dialogue where

Everybody is to speak his mind. No proposition is to be left unexamined. The exchange of ideas is held to be the path to the realization of the potentialities of the race (Hutchins, 1952, Vol. 1, p. 1).

Perhaps one of the greatest contributions of the *Handbook of Parapsychology* is to direct attention to some of those "potentialities of the race." As such, it is also a handbook for change, for it provides visions of possibility for a new frontier of learning and understanding. It is a frontier of social and individual change whose precise dimensions are blurred but where a rough outline may be dimly discerned. It is a frontier where individual and mutual effort can begin to explore another aspect of "latent human possibility" and its beneficial application to the learning and helping professions. But while challenges in the past were often concerned with mastery of the external environment, the challenge of the new frontier is an internal one, the challenge of awakening, with wisdom, slumbering abilities within the self.

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