

MIND-REACH

Scientists Look at Psychic Ability

by

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INTRODUCTION

BY

MARGARET MEAD

This book is a clear, straightforward account of a set of successful experiments that demonstrate the existence of "remote viewing," a hitherto unvalidated human capacity. The conventional and time-honored canons of the laboratory have been observed, aided by our current repertoire of instrumentation, Faraday shielding, specifically generated sets of random numbers, and cathode rays. People—both inexperienced learners as well as those who have previously demonstrated psychic proficiency—have been used as subjects successfully. It is a perfectly regular and normal piece of scientific work, as is the study of communication among bees, the luminescence of fireflies, the way in which frogs discriminate between the sexes, or the scientific study of any new biological phenomena.

Contemporary quantum physics, specific qualities of electromagnetic fields, and advances in brain research not only have determined the experimental methods, but have contributed to the tentative explanations advanced in this book as to how this newly observed ability might operate. As all work following the canons of science must be, the experiments are presented in a form that can be inspected and replicated under the same conditions, and further tested by altering various experimental parameters.

The claimed results are narrow but clear. The particular set of

Introduction

human beings studied have been able to produce formal drawings on paper approximating some distant spatial target mediated only by the independent designation of the target and the concentration and attention of the subject.

In terms of the ordinary type of painstaking procedures of the scientific method, we should now be well launched into a new era of exploring aspects of the human mind, with which scientists previously have had difficulty in dealing. There have been other thoroughly creditable, conventionally structured experiments before. But these have not received the kind of acceptance normally given within what scientists feel is a wholly rational, totally trustworthy scientific community. In fact, I think it may be fair to say that as the experimental methods to investigate so-called psychic powers have improved, so have the violence of controversy, the proclamations of disbelief, and the accusations of either conscious or unconscious fraud.

These particular experiments do start with several advantages: they come out of physics, popularly believed to be the hardest of the hard sciences; they come out of a respected laboratory; and they do not appear to be the work of true believers who set out to use science to validate passionately held beliefs. Tremendous efforts have been used which far outstrip the normal procedures to guarantee scientific credibility. Perhaps this in itself may make them less easily accepted. For scientists on the whole take each other's word for most of their experiments, and only present their data in completely accessible form when others have failed to replicate their experiments, seldom distrusting the carefulness and honesty of their colleagues.

We may well ask why it is necessary, in studies of this kind, to have at least twice as many safeguards and artificial substitutes for integrity as those usually demanded. Why does the psychic research worker, following ordinary rules, have to anticipate more hurdles than research workers in other controversial fields—such as the study of the inheritance of acquired characters, the existence of eidetic imagery, mind/body relationships postulated for somatotypic studies, or the findings of psychoanalysis. In all of these fields, those who claimed new results have been subjected to enormous academic

Introduction

punishment. They have been tempted to distort or suppress their data. Many have become unscientifically dogmatic and stubborn advocates of their positions. And, occasionally, some have been driven into exile, or even into desperate situations involving suicide, misery, and death.

The scientific world and the literate public have been fully exposed to the intricacies of disputes involving scientific theories so dogmatic as to resemble religious beliefs. Among other topics, they have been treated to diatribes on the impossibility of transmitting acquired characters and to the inextricable associations made between some scientific claim and the sociological platforms of communism, capitalism, fascism, or racism. We have read *Double Helix*, the accounts of Lysenko, *Tempter* by Norbert Wiener, and most recently the story of Bill Summerlin in June Goodfield's *The Siege of Cancer*. We have even read of the early use of the microscope to find miniature horses in horse sperm.

Psychic researchers do, I think, sometimes forget that they are not the only research workers who are subjected to harassment, misquotation, and unfair attack when they challenge old theories and propose new ones. Yet when we examine the history of the last hundred years, in which careful experimentation has been continuously misrepresented and denied, we find many recognized scientists insisting that psychic research should be endlessly repeated because it is not a "recognized area of scientific research." As one person quoted in this manuscript said, "This is the kind of thing that I would not believe in even if it existed." We can easily conclude that this is indeed an area of scientific research more fraught with irrational opposition than most, although hardly more subject to attack than, for example, psychoanalysis.

There are, I think, a series of historical reasons for this. It would be valuable for the open-minded reader to explore some of the historical and cross-cultural backgrounds of psi capacity. It seems to be a very unevenly distributed ability, overtly manifested by only a few individuals. In most societies, no connection is made between these very special unique "sensitives" and the rest of the population. Sometimes, in other societies, the capabilities exhibited by the few individuals are generalized, but if there are a large number of

Introduction

individuals believed to be capable of some exercise of psi—like predicting the future, diagnosing illness, or healing the sick—then the individuals who would normally stand out are simply absorbed into a group of practitioners and their special abilities go unremarked. Other societies outlaw all such behavior as coming from the devil or involving fraud, and here again, both the uniquely gifted and the somewhat gifted will be discouraged.

Furthermore, there is good reason to believe that the practitioner of an uninstitutionalized art—such as a prophet or healer or diagnostician—may have limited understanding or control of his or her special capacities. There is therefore a tremendous temptation to include various kinds of tricks in the practitioner's repertoire, in case the little understood and unreliable power fails. This may be why the tricks of the healer who palms a "pain" by extracting a small crystal from the body of a patient go hand in hand with the demonstration of special healing abilities. The charismatic leader may also substitute oratorical tricks for the spontaneity which won him his original place. The medium who once could easily attain an altered state of consciousness may take along a glove filled with wet sand, in case the spirits fail to arrive. There seems to be a fluctuating, unpredictable quality about these special powers, which may be due to nothing more than the lack of a stable cultural understanding.

In any event, such abilities should probably be classified with all other statistically unusual abilities, such as the amazing aptitudes of some individuals to arouse awe or wonder.

As scientific exploration tells us more about how these capabilities can be disciplined and developed—as mathematical and musical ability have been fostered in the past—many conditions of uncertainty surrounding psi capacity can be removed. For example, the sophistication possessed by one of the subjects mentioned in this book in his describing the necessary conditions for "remote viewing" is particularly striking.

Psychic powers have historically been closely associated with powers of healing, an area where faith and hope and response to placebos means that many diagnoses and many cures remain problematical. Faith in the healer is essential to the ability of the healer to heal, so that both healer and patient are held in a tight circular

Introduction

system which is beneficial to both, and dangerous to break. The vested claims of other kinds of healers inevitably come in conflict with the claims for and by the psychic healer, further obscuring rational discussion. The reception accorded psychoanalysis and all attempts to trace symptoms or their relief to communicative activities is analogous to the reception given to reports of psychic healing—sometimes with amusing overtones such as when the psychoanalyst who holds to a carefully structured theory of what is happening is obliquely credited with "just having generalized therapeutic powers" as a way of explaining the theory away!

Through the ages, deliberate magical procedures have also taken on independent life, and guilds of conjurers and magicians naturally hold vested interests in their bags of tricks. It has become customary to include expert magicians among the groups testing the powers of sensitives, and to give critical comment on the conditions under which experimental proof for some psychic ability is sought. From this has arisen the curious type of criticism which will undoubtedly plague psychic research for a long time to come, that if a particular act could have been performed by a magician, then it could not have been genuinely psychic. But is this any more meaningful than the kinds of doubt which plague the study of the psychosomatic disorders of a single patient who displays a mixed set of symptoms which could be "caused" by several different sets of antecedent circumstances?

I think one of the worst complications arises when both sensitives themselves and their followers advocate psychic energies as being "extrasensory," as proof of life after death, or of the existence of supernatural or transcendent powers of some sort. When they attach such a belief system to something as little-known and undependable as psychic energy, fanaticism is often substituted for open-mindedness. The very tenuousness of the connection, the insistence upon a physical manifestation of a power claimed to be outside the physical universe, means that they must cling to their beliefs more strongly in the face of all evidence to the contrary. When scientific methods were applied to the study of psychic powers, the confrontations became increasingly dogmatic, the arguments became more farfetched, and paranoia on both sides arose.

Introduction

It is often hard to tell the fanaticism of the true believer from the paranoia of the serious experimenter, as each side feeds upon the other's obstinate insistence. No researcher on psychic abilities can expect to be free of this situation, and certainly the authors of the present book were not immune to misrepresentations by both the credulous and the stubbornly unconvinced.

The SRI research not only displays the elegance characteristic of physical experimentation and theory, but the experimenters have also used an imaginative approach to the human aspects of their problem. Where too many experimenters have put their "subjects" through long, dull, repetitive performances—during which whatever psychic capacities they had first displayed eventually deteriorated—Targ and Puthoff have realized that boring experiments are unproductive for learners, and resented by sensitives with developed psychic powers. Furthermore, where much of existing research has treated the human participants as either "subjects" (usually thought of as human substitutes for rats persuaded to run a maze) or impostors or self-deluded oddities, Targ and Puthoff have treated both their apprentice learners and experienced sensitives as collaborators and persons whose views were to be respected. It is unique here that the subjects were considered as partners in research. And Puthoff and Targ have been richly rewarded and have gained new insights into the complicated and delicate processes involved in "remote viewing."

In addition to the "remote viewing," in which the participants were most successful in picturing by drawing rather than by verbally describing and interpreting the nature of the "target" areas, the authors present a few cases of precognition—correct viewing of the target area *before* it is known to the observer who is later to be directed there by randomly chosen instructions. These are the cases which raise the most interesting questions both for the contemporary state of theory in physics, and for the way in which precognition may be expected to function in everyday life. If there is precognition of a future event, such as a train wreck, can death in the wreck be avoided by not taking the train, even though the wreck still occurs? Stated succinctly, does precognition add up to greater freedom of the will, or to a new prescription for despair? There seems little

Introduction

reason to believe that human beings could live with the certain knowledge of disasters which they would have no power to prevent. This issue is not yet faced by the experimenters, but will, I understand, be on their future agenda.

A second issue, which will undoubtedly be picked up by the sensationalist press, and which flows from the accounts of Soviet interest in mind influencing from a distance, is the prevalence of fantasies surrounding spying and being spied upon. "Could the enemy read the President's mind?" as one newspaper account put it. But such fantasies of omnipotence or total vulnerability to inimical forces have been continuously fed and exaggerated for over a quarter century by the science fiction in which many dilemmas are solved not by science, but by ESP. These fictions represent easy solutions, most likely unreal and certainly regressive and unchallenging in nature.

Thirdly, these experiments are concerned with the ability of participants to penetrate shielding when both participants are willing to do so. But it may prove quite possible that this channel could be as successfully blocked as it can be successfully opened. Experiments which demonstrate that there is a counterpart to the cooperation between the observer at the target and the observer in the shielded laboratory, in which a trained observer at the target blocks the channel, would go a long way to avert all the suggestions that one's mind can be "read," creating the strange paranoia that, in this postwar world of nuclear threat, is inevitably exacerbated in the minds of the public, in the press, and even by fellow scientists.

Finally, I think it is important to realize that if a certain psi phenomenon can be studied by scientific methods and one or more of its mechanisms involved can be related to existing scientific theory, this does not necessarily lead to a reductionist demolition of the essence of the phenomenon. Explaining the behavior of great artists in terms of childhood trauma, order of birth, or congenital excess of a hormone may advance our knowledge of biological functions far more than it explains a great work of art. Those who wish to relate the human condition to some transcendent power in the universe should be better, not worse, off by an increased knowledge of electromagnetic mechanisms. Science is not simply a device for

Introduction

explaining away events and capacities hitherto thought to be God-given. Because science expands one type of knowledge, it need not denigrate another. All great scientists have understood this. But those who hold a slavish belief in "scientific facts" and who do not understand the glorious uncertainties of modern science are likely to come to small conclusions that are as trivializing as reducing "remote viewing" to repetitious "readings" of a pack of cards.

As I understand contemporary trends in physical science, there is increasing recognition of vast unknown areas which science may explore and assist in ordering, but to which it may never provide anything like complete answers. Such explorations, however, should greatly expand our present paradigms.

—M.M.

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THE STAR FEBRUARY 4, 1977 PAGE 4

HOW I TAUGHT MYSELF ESP

By Star reporter Meredith Chaplin



STAR reporter Charles Brown and myself this week tested an amazing new teach-yourself-ESP technique — and found that it can work.

The method, called remote viewing, was evolved by two respected scientists, Dr. Russel Targ and Dr. Harold Puthoff of the Sanford Research Institute in Menlo Park, Calif.

They say that remote viewing enables a person to describe remote "target" locations — unknown to them — simply by sitting in a quiet room with eyes closed, watching images forming in their mind.

The two scientists say the technique has been successfully tested by psychic Uri Geller and New York artist Ingo Swann. Their work has also been praised by famed anthropologist Dr. Margaret Mead.

This week the STAR decided to put it to the test. While I sat in a dimly-lit room, reporter Brown left our office in midtown Manhattan, telling no one where he was going.

At a pre-arranged time I relaxed and closed my eyes, as in-

structed in the remote viewing technique. I could see treetops marking the edge of an expanse, with buildings beyond them.

It was only later that I discovered that Charles was looking at a similar scene. He had taken a cab to Columbia University, and got out at 116th Street. He walked east on 116th to Morningside Drive and found himself at the top of a wooded slope, looking over bare treetops. There were apartment buildings beyond.

He then walked back along 116th Street, looking at the apartment buildings on the south side of the street. They were Victorian brick and concrete structures, seven stories high.

Back in THE STAR office, I could see gingerbread-like old buildings, not too tall.

Charles crossed Amsterdam Avenue, and proceeded toward Columbia University's old library, a squarish building topped by a shallow dome. Leading down from it were steps.

To the right was a round foun-

tain, to the left an old Gothic style church.

In the most remarkable associations of the whole experiment, I visualized a round roof, like the top of a carousel, a round shape, like a pond, and steps or a narrow ramp.

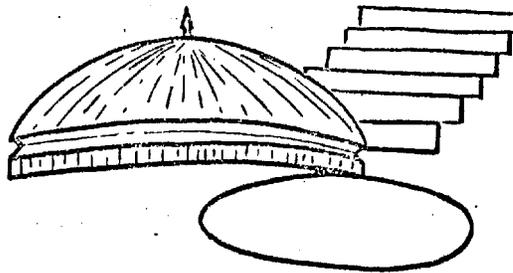
I found that the major problem with the experiment was that I tried to associate the images with an area I knew.

I had never been to the area of Manhattan where Charles was, and I thought he was seeing Central Park.

The things I did see seemed free-floating, without any scale or surroundings.

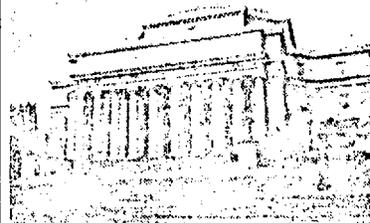
Scientists Targ and Puthoff say that remote viewing has also been successfully tested by Richard Bach, author of *Jonathon Livingstone Seagull*.

Bach tells in the book how he watched a "surreal television picture" in his mind of another person at a secret location several blocks away. His description was close to the reality.



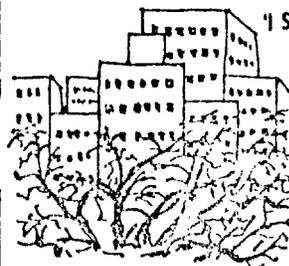
'I COULD SEE A ROUND ROOF AND A POND'

Above is the sketch reporter Meredith Chaplin made of her image. At left is the old library at New York's Columbia University.



'I SAW TREETOPS, OLD BUILDINGS'

At left is her sketch of trees and buildings. Below is spot where staffer Charles Brown stood.



HERE is how to teach yourself the remote viewing technique, put forward by Dr. Harold Puthoff and Dr. Russel Targ:

Determine if you feel any resistance to the idea of psychic functioning, or the belief that you can describe a scene beyond your normal senses. Has someone in authority said it was impossible, or nonsense?

Repeat these questions until you feel comfortably convinced, even though you may suspect that the suspension of disbelief is only temporary.

Ask a friend to pick a location — preferably unknown to you — and tell the friend to be there at a particular time, and to remain there for 15 minutes. The person at the target site must pay attention to where he is, and observe.

At the same time, you, the subject, should be in a quiet, perhaps dimly-lit place where you are comfortable.

Sit up and remain alert. About one minute before the time the experiment is to begin, relax and calm your thoughts.

It is not necessary to do more than this: no special routine or meditation is needed.

Now try to describe the target location — to yourself or to another friend. Describe the mental images that seem to be associated with the target area. Just relate the basic colors, shapes and feelings. It is essential to avoid "trying to name the place."

Try sketching the images that come to mind. Be willing to draw what pops into your mind, even though you don't know what it is that the drawings represent.

You should visit the remote target as soon as possible after the end of the 15 minute interval allotted for remote viewing. In this way, feedback takes place while the images are still fresh in your mind, and you can make an internal comparison that will be useful in future experiments.

AFTER trying this experiment, do you think you can do "remote viewing?" Tell THE STAR of your experience. \$5 for every letter published Write: Remote Viewing, The Star, 730 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.