

CLINICAL PARAPSYCHOLOGY AND THE NATURE OF REALITY

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What is Clinical Parapsychology?

There appears to be an increasingly widespread interest in, and increasing personal experience of, the anomalous, the paranormal and the otherworldly on the part of an ever-larger percentage of the population. These experiences can often be unsettling or problematic, troubling or threatening for them or for others. Some may think they are losing their minds or are in other ways becoming detached from, or are questioning, their usual day-to-day lives and their long-held beliefs. Such experiences may also lead to estrangement from others and even dysfunction and psychopathology. Ideally, people having non-ordinary experiences might like to talk with a professional who is qualified to provide the best counseling and help that is possible to obtain, given the kind of experience involved. This situation calls for a new breed of professional-- what I am calling the "Clinical Parapsychologist." Rosebridge Graduate School of Integrative Psychology (called The American Schools of Professional Psychology, San Francisco Bay Area Campus since 1998), where I have worked for the last 16 years, was the only place in the United States with a program devoted to this training. The only other school developing a focus in this area anywhere else in the world is the University of Freiberg, in Germany. This field would seek to develop a new kind of "X-Files" professional in the paranormal, retaining the investigative aspect, but with listening, teaching, counseling, healing, research, and perhaps even paranormal skills replacing guns and badges.

At Rosebridge, I defined "Clinical Parapsychology" as an emerging hybrid field that will prepare a new kind of professional with dual training in counseling, psychotherapy, and clinical professional psychology to the point of licensure, on the one hand, and training in the paranormal, including parapsychology, on the other. Such a professional would then be optimally trained to help others who have been having-- or seem to have been having-- paranormal, non-ordinary, or otherworldly experiences that are sufficiently unsettling, troubling, or curiosity provoking to move them to seek help of one kind or another. This help could come in the form of information, knowledge, and understanding; of support, therapy, and help in "making it stop;" or, conversely, help in finding ways to develop it further for positive use for oneself and others; or help in conducting testing or research that might resolve the nature and ultimate reality of that which is responsible for the paranormal experiences and their presenting problems or challenges. The clinical parapsychologist would be able to help those experiencing this larger, questionable reality to cease their connection to it, if they so desire, returning to a more limited but safe-feeling reality, or to help them continue to operate with respect to the larger reality with greater understanding, comfort, and control, and yet still be able to

function successfully within the local consensus reality. In addition, such a clinical parapsychologist might also be able to bring to the counseling, psychotherapeutic, clinical, healing setting some degree of his/her own psychic abilities developed as part of his/her educational training that could supplement, not replace, traditional diagnostic and treatment skills.

Experiences to be Addressed by the Clinical Parapsychologist

First, there is the matter of how we define what are the non-ordinary or paranormal experiences that may be addressed by the clinical parapsychologist. I will probably err on the side of being more, rather than less, inclusive in this regard.

By my definition, such experiences will include spontaneous psi experiences (i.e., psychic phenomena, experiences, or abilities) of a wide variety of kinds. There is the area of unbidden extrasensory perception (ESP), or anomalous cognition, and its subspecies; i.e., telepathy, clairvoyance or remote viewing; having particularly vivid and meaningful or correlatable mental imagery or visions; clairaudience, or hearing inner voices; experiencing precognition, both waking and in the dream state; and channeling, where the communicating beings are supposedly other than human spirits who have survived bodily death; and it could include unwanted psychic attack or possession by fellow incarnate spirits.

Then there is the second major parapsychological realm of psychokinesis (PK), or anomalous mind-matter relations, and its subspecies. This would include, among other things, the poltergeist-type, or just general PK-seeming, effecting of aspects of the nearby physical environment either consciously or unconsciously; it would include being on either the healer or healee end of the process of mental, psychic, or anomalous healing or Bio-PK, local or distant, which would include experienced miraculous cures or spontaneous remission; and it would include working with people who are ill and are seeking "second opinions" that may involve such anomalous healing; and there is also the rarer domain of materialization/dematerialization, levitation, teleportation, stigmatization and other non-ordinary somatizations, and transubstantiation.

Then there are spontaneous experiences that occur within the third and final main branch of parapsychology that deals with survival (of physical death) phenomena and research. These include the onset of apparent mediumship/channeling ability involving seeming communication with human spirits surviving bodily death; all manner of near-death experiences (NDEs), dying, and supposed post-mortem and after-life experiences; the out-of-body (OBE) experience, because this involves apparent human consciousness, sentience, and will operating without a human brain and body; experiences of possession and obsession and various kinds of seeming "psychic attack" by surviving "earthbound" discarnate spirits; hauntings, ghosts, apparitions and death-bed and other visions of fellow human spirits seeming to have survived the death of their bodies; the realms of reincarnation and past-life, pre-birth, and between-lives memories and experiences, especially when they come on unwillingly and cause stress or a need to resolve, understand, and integrate them.

Then, besides experiences that are reflected in these three main branches of parapsychology-- ESP, PK, and Survival-- that would move someone to seek help of one kind or another, I'd also add all challenging or problematic spontaneously arising or uncontrolled altered states of consciousness (ASCs) and the novel and often unsettling experiential realms they can lead one into. I would also add the experience of synchronicity of unusual quantity or quality.

I would also include the (for me) related domains of inter- or multi- or other-dimensional experience, whether beings or aspects of such other realms appear to intrude into one's own "normal" objective and subjective reality, or whether one finds oneself making usually uncontrolled or unwanted excursions into such other non- or trans-physical realms, which may also include interaction with their indigenous inhabitants. I'd also include tapping into realms of unknown subtle energies and unusual causal powers. This would include aspects of magic/magik, sorcery, alchemy, and shamanism, whether one is guided into these areas by someone and then problems ensue, or whether one finds oneself being visited seemingly accidentally and meaninglessly by these powers and abilities.

I would also add the whole realm of so-called close encounters, of apparent interaction with purported extraterrestrials (ETs), beings not of Earth's origin and lineage and whose home and base-line individual mode of embodiment may or may not be physical as we know it. This would include becoming a UFO/ET realm "experiencer" of one of a number of kinds: conscious and willing contactee, unwilling abductee, or channel for ETs; or of becoming, via any of these three modes of interaction, aware that one is a kind of hybrid, part ET and part human, or of being an ET incarnated for this lifetime as an Earth human, and that this has been only fleetingly revealed against a backdrop of usually being amnesiac and unconscious with regard to such memories or awareness of the trans- or non-human nature or aspect of oneself.

Finally, there is the entire realm of unsettling religio-spiritual experiences, involving non-physical spiritual realms and being/beings/Being; experiences with the angelic realm, with Ascended Masters from the White Brotherhood or other transcendent inner planes occult or mystery school discarnate groups who claim, somewhat like angels, to be doing God's will with regard to us flesh-weighted and veiled, less-evolved spirits here on Earth. And then there are the various levels, degrees, and kinds of closing-the-gap personal mystic experiences we incarnate human beings/spirits occasionally seem to have of the Divine, of God Itself; and there is the related, controversial area of human beings transiently becoming visited, overshadowed or crowned by, or directly becoming the case of, Christ, Buddha, Krishna, or God consciousness. This final religio-spiritual category has been addressed by Stan and Christina Grof and their followers, and by others, under what they are calling the new branch of the helping professions that deals with "spiritual emergence" or "spiritual emergency." Here the clinical parapsychologist can be called upon to deal with the relationship between the psychic (including ASCs) and the spiritual (which, although often overlapping to varying degrees, are not necessarily the same domain or kind of experience). And, as in the case of all the other kinds of experience that could be addressed by the clinical parapsychologist that are mentioned in this

section, there is the ongoing challenge of helping the individual maintain, or return to, healthy ego function within the consensus reality. And there is also the shadow side of the religio-spiritual experience that can involve what has been termed the demonic, Satanic, or Luciferian, which includes cases of obsession, possession, and other unwanted, spiritually counterproductive connection to that which is, or to those which are, darkly opposite of “The Light,” least expressing the non-dualistic all-loving source, God.

Function Vs. Dysfunction

Moving beyond considering the multifaceted nature of what I’m generally calling non-ordinary or paranormal experiences, there is then the matter of function versus dysfunction. To the extent to which such experiences enter into one’s life without warning and often without any sense of personal control or understanding regarding them at the time, the individual can lose enough touch with consensus reality and suffer enough of a deterioration or diffusion of ego strength or boundaries and of the ability to reality test, that there is an impairment in functioning that can manifest in problems of making sense of things, of being able to communicate, of being able to take care of oneself day-to-day, of being able to stay focused and functional in one’s relationships, in being a mate, parent, offspring, sibling, friend, neighbor, or job-holder, and of being a productive card-carrying member of the local consensus reality in general.

For example, is there a kind of unipolar mania, or seeming delusional system, that arises as a result of, or is the cause of, many paranormal experiences or abilities that could be a problem for the person or for those around him or her? Are there panic attacks? Or is there some kind of dissociation at work? How is the person, or others involved, to know if the visions, voices, or transcendent or otherworldly seeming experiences are due to personal inner, or outer supposed objective reality, origin--subjective or objective? Are they only the stuff of delusion, hallucination, misperception, thought disorder, etc., or are they the result of veridical (connected to “reality”) perceptions, including via the inner eye or ear? And who’s to say; who’s to judge?

As a result of the onset of the unusual experiences, do the people become anxious that they may be “losing their minds,” “going off the deep end,” and so on? And, if so, is there a desire on the part of the individual to make it stop and go away, or to at least integrate it into his/her “normal” lived experience? Do problems arise as a function of how individual others (or “the system” in general) perceive and treat the person having the unusual experiences or abilities? Is there a need for knowledgeable others to talk with to gain information, understanding, perspective, or a feeling of not being alone in having such experiences?

From a somewhat different perspective, does one, paradoxically, find oneself in the realm of extreme function, rather than dysfunction, but in such a way that it can also create problems of integration, meaning making, control, and of how one is perceived and treated by others? That we may be dealing in such cases with a new kind of optimum performance or actualization of new reaches of human potential such that one is, in a way, more, rather than less, of a person, is functioning more fully than most normal

people and more fully than his/her previous self. If so, can't this create problems for the individual; and, if so, who is there to help?

Who is Best Equipped to Help?

Who, then, is best qualified to work with and help individuals who are having such non-ordinary or paranormal experiences, especially when they become anxiety provoking, other ways problematic, or simply threaten to render them dysfunctional without intervention by a sufficiently knowledgeable and experienced professional or other person?

Is the person who is having the experience the best one to figure it out for him or her self, to make it better, to resolve it with the rest of day-to-day existence that certainly isn't going away? After all, that is the person who is the expert on his/her own experience, the one closest to it, who empirically knows it best. While this may be ultimately metaphysically true, I find it hard to go along with in the press of the here and now, especially when the people having such unusual experiences (including myself, on occasion) may be too shaken, out of control, or lacking the emotional, intellectual, social, or other resources to minister sufficiently unto themselves or to be ministered unto by others.

Are today's licensed mental health counselors, professional psychologists, other helping professionals, psychotherapists, and psychiatrists equipped to address the nature of what such experiencers have been living through and to help them deal with being in and of both the realm of their anomalous experience and of the consensus reality within which they must continue to live and function? In general, I don't think so. They are pretty good at getting people back into the realm of ego and consensus reality, but they are not very good at all at dealing with the indigenous reality that may be involved in the non-ordinary realm of experience. There is too much of a disposition on the part of most such professionals to relegate such anomalous experiences only to the realm of self-generated subjective material, with the implication that there is little or no ontological rank, status, or meaning to be given to the stuff of such experiences other than DSM-IV psychopathology, out-of-kilter brain biochemistry, or psychodynamic fantasy production associated with unresolved personal issues.

What about those who are knowledgeable about the paranormal by reason of study, scholarship, and research, who may have had indirect or even direct experiences of someone else's paranormal experiences, but have had little or usually no direct personal experiences of their own paranormal experience or ability-- such as the vast majority of educators, authors, scholars, scientists, and researchers in the areas of psychical or consciousness studies, of parapsychology, ufology, new science, shamanism, religio-spiritual and transpersonal studies? In this case, I think, again in general, that they are not very well equipped to make the best judgment calls about, or be sufficiently helpful with regard to, matters of the person dealing with his/her non-ordinary experience, with regard to helping develop coping skills and dealing with the reality vs. unreality, subjective vs. objective, healthy vs. unhealthy, aspects of such experiences and experiencers. I say this because such professionals are usually not also adequately trained

in the areas of counseling, professional psychology, and psychiatry, including knowledge of psychopathology and psychophysiology. But then again, as previously mentioned, the irony is that those trained in psychology and psychiatry are usually not very well suited to deal with people with paranormal experiences either.

What about someone who is having problematic paranormal experiences being helped by a fellow experiencer who has been able to successfully come through, or continue to live with, his/her own paranormal experience? Here there may be some real hope of help being available. This is the realm of peer counseling; of empathy, compassion, tough love, and of sharing a common ground of lived experience. This is analogous to the former drug addict or alcoholic working with those currently in the throes of addiction; of the prisoner or ex-prisoner working with those poised to commit crimes that might get them into prison; of the former schizophrenic, now successfully “healed,” working to help “heal” the current schizophrenic.

Overall, I think that the best help would be available from people who were grounded in all three: 1) formal training and knowledge in the area(s) of counseling, psychology, psychotherapy, and/or psychiatry; 2.) formal training and knowledge in the area(s) of the paranormal and non-ordinary, of psychical research, consciousness studies, parapsychology, religio-spiritual and transpersonal studies, new science and metaphysics; and 3.) direct personal experience with the paranormal and non-ordinary (including the transpersonal/spirituo-mystical), and having weathered such personal experience successfully so that they could proceed with their lives with healthy egos and productive and fulfilling functioning within the consensus reality. And I would add to this third domain that they would have done this for themselves without necessarily having left behind, or having demoted or dismissed in any way, the reality, meaningfulness, and even usefulness and benefit to others, of that which went, and may still go, with the territory of the paranormal, non-ordinary, or otherworldly. For example, they may have developed and feel comfortable and in control with their own psychic abilities which can now be used for the benefit of themselves and society. So, I see the ideal clinical parapsychologist of the future having training, competency, and experience across all three of these areas.

Is there hope, then, of providing adequate training for such an ideal professional? At Rosebridge, I have tried to pioneer this field, but I have serious concerns that I will be able to conduct this work there in the future. So, it may rest with my taking such a program to another school, or it may rest with such a program being started by others in other institutions, or it may depend on non-academic grass roots activity and organizations of like-minded people sharing their respective vision, experiences, and desire to be of service in this way. [Note: since this article was originally written, I have developed new, complete masters and doctoral degree programs in “Parapsychology and Paranormal Studies” at Greenwich University, a new, nationally accredited, 100% distance learning graduate school in Australia, with the programs to begin in January 2000, and in which one area of specialization can be clinical parapsychology.]

Some Speculations on A Sample Clinical Parapsychology Case Study

The following is a fairly typical example of what I would consider the kind of case appropriate for this new breed of clinical parapsychologist. It is drawn from the dozens of people I have worked with recently.

This person I have selected was referred to me about three years ago. He claimed to possess certain psychic abilities, which started after a serious automobile accident a number of years ago. He claimed that a covert group from a governmental agency knew of his abilities and periodically visited him uninvited. Visit is perhaps too nice a word. They would appear, and while one group waited in the next room, another group would extract paranormal information from him for their own use and as a way to have on-going evidence of the authenticity of his claims. The difficult part of his story, however, was the control and coercion part: He said that they tortured him in various ways both to get the information they wanted and to threaten him so that he would not make such information available to anyone else or even let others know he or anyone else was capable of access to such psi information. He felt terrorized, manipulated, and controlled and he wanted help in doing something about it, because he felt relatively powerless.

So, let me share with you some things I think I have learned from this case. First of all, I described by e-mail or telephone to eight people in some detail the story as told to me on the telephone by this person-- let's call him Edward-- before I went to see him in person. All of these people, in my estimation, had considerable expertise and experience either in clinical parapsychology or at least in the clinical or the parapsychological area alone. Every one of them told me that, on the basis of my description of his story thus far, he sounded pretty crazy and that I'd better watch myself. Diagnostic terms such as paranoia, delusional, pathological, psychotic, and schizophrenic were being used.

But still, I thought to myself, there's something about his story that I tend to want to stay open to, to maybe even want to believe. After all, I was pretty much up to speed on following the various conspiracy theories, even if some of them were beyond the pale for me, and his story sort of fit the picture of a lot of that; and I knew, especially, the claims of government involvement in some of the UFO abduction cases. Also, I knew there's been a lot of covert activity going on about psychic ability and its use, especially by the military and the more totalitarian, manipulative aspects at the secret government level. And I also have found myself tending to believe in the reality of the shadow side of human and non-human existence that's part of the larger contending of forces at work in the Universe at large and in our local earthly region, physical and otherwise, in particular (more about that in the final section of this piece). Plus, it seemed clear to me that he genuinely believed that what he was sharing with me really did occur to him, which is authenticity of at least one kind.

So I was actually taken aback when so many of my colleagues cast their vote for craziness in this man's case. I kept thinking, no, it may not be that simple. That is, the black and white scenario may not fit: that he has to be either just crazy (i.e., making it up but not realizing he's doing so) and none of his story is real, or that he's not crazy and every bit of it is real. But more than saying that it might not be just the black or the white

version, I kept thinking more largely: What is reality anyway? What constitutes something being real? And for whom, and under what conditions, is something real? There I was, right back in Philosophy 101, ruminating about what is the nature of reality: Is there an invariant objective reality outside of attending, experiencing consciousness; and how much does individual consciousness contribute, if at all, to the experiences we have that we attribute to objects and events existing in supposed external reality?

I did, on very short notice, manage to get one person with definite clinical parapsychology experience and expertise to accompany me to his motel room where we had a 90-minute meeting. By the end of the 90 minutes, I had pretty much moved over to the perspective of my colleagues, who had not met him, but who had counseled me that he was probably nuts and to watch myself so that I did not get pulled into his own private universe.

First, an aside: I work differently than most people I know. With regard to claims of the paranormal, if I start off with my intuition telling me to proceed openly, I tend to believe that something could be the case as claimed unless and until my belief is abused by evidence or experience that makes me end up not believing what I once believed. This is in contradistinction to most people, who tend to start off not believing in something unless and until they have evidence and experience that will lead them to believe it. So, with Edward, this was, for me, a case of my having whatever degree of initial intuitive openness I had on the basis of his story told to me in the numerous earlier phone-calls gradually dissolved by him in person as he compounded ever more unbelievable aspects of his story. Plus, he kept peppering what he was saying with allusions to juicy stuff that could help verify his story, ground it, give it weight, allow us to corroborate it, but then saying he couldn't share that with us.

I finally said to him: Look, you first need to agree to see a psychiatrist or licensed professional psychologist (I was neither), because, if your story is true, then you need to diffuse this obvious conclusion, that people are liable to jump to in listening to your claims, that you're just crazy paranoid delusional, and you need to defuse this by getting a professional to give you a relatively clean bill of mental health; and, second, you need to provide specific names, dates, witnesses, examples, and out-and-out evidence of your self-professed psychic gifts (and shadowy wrongs done to you), otherwise it stays a story that only you can attest to and, obviously, it's a pretty extreme story. That is, it's back to the old adage that extraordinary claims require extraordinary, or at least very strong, evidence to support them.

When did I start drawing my own line in the sand about Edward? Well, I was OK with regard to his description of his car accident near-death experience; and I was OK about his claims of psychic abilities that followed (that is, that such were possible). For example, he said he could effect all of the monitoring devices at the hospital where he was recuperating and that the hospital staff noticed this. This sounds, if true, like some kind of psychokinesis, and, based on my knowledge of the parapsychology literature, I can certainly accept the possibility of that. But, apparently, describing his NDE and some precognitive glimpses, and effecting these measuring devices and supposedly changing

his own blood pressure, et al, at will, according to him lead to both in and after hospital surveillance of him and later patterns of being followed, being eavesdropped on, being studied at great length, usually with a negative tone to it all. Here is where the flavor of the story changes and darkens for me. He is not describing a case of scientific curiosity about his abilities; this is, rather, bad guys and spies and sinister motives time. Why, then, is this all done behind his back? Why all the secrecy? Where does the motivation come from for all these people to be acting this way with regard to him? Why would a whole group of people spend years preoccupied with him, simply because of these possibly authentic psychic abilities of his? Why such an investment? And why such subterfuge, secrecy, and negativity?

Then he described how "they" got to his college instructors so that the instructors would end up interested in and addressing just him in lectures in classes of more than 100 other students. I was finding it hard to stick with him through this ever-broadening and deepening story of people seemingly preoccupied and devoted to studying and dogging him from a secretive distance. And, this on top of the more brazen, intrusive Hollywood-type strong-arm information extraction and control tactics. Yet, while I knew the literature on paranoid delusional thinking, and I understood the nature of psychosis, I must admit, I was still hanging in there, turning the other cheek with each new slap of story line, still presenting myself to him with positive regard and willing suspension of disbelief, and with what William James called "the will to believe."

But then we moved on to how, when the middle-of-the-night interrogators ticked him off too much, he "prayed to the Lord" and caused great thunder to sound that all heard, and then six months later, he was affecting weather patterns. And then there was the part about being a "warrior prophet;" that he was part of a long lineage of same (that he could not divulge to me anything about because of the secret vows he'd taken); and the part about the odyssey his inner guides took him on to find the woman to give birth to the prophet to succeed him. I could tell by the look in his eye that he was really feeling his oats now. It was real delusions of grandeur time. He was definitely stoking up his sense of personal power, and I could feel it clear across the room. However, I had by now pretty much exhausted my capacity to be able to make all these pieces of his story fit into a single believable whole that rang true for me. My intuition was flashing all its warning signs to me. He was fast turning himself into a classic textbook paranoid delusional case before my eyes (and my colleague, who accompanied me, concurred). I realized, as I continued to listen, that, if he had dropped some of these other parts of his story in with the limited narrative he had shared with me during our earlier phone calls, I probably would never have agreed to the in-person meeting. I would, instead, have referred him by telephone to a clinical psychologist or a psychiatrist with a reasonable knowledge of and openness to the paranormal and with experience in working with this particular combination of presenting characteristics (not that there are very many of them around).

I also noticed an interesting relationship: Skeptics of claims of the paranormal tend to go to great lengths in order to explain away such claims in terms they understand. As a result, for example, the phenomenon of the crop circles needs to be explained by them in terms of extended prank and hoax activity; yet in order to account for the number and

complexity of the incidences globally, it would require hundreds of people devoted to doing nothing but this and probably requiring a considerable budget to carry it all out. And then the question would be: Why? What is their motivation? Suffice it to say, there are many types of phenomena that get similarly explained according to large numbers of people spending years and small fortunes just to trick us, and they always stay anonymous, they never come out and take the credit with a triumphant: "Ha, we fooled you!" This kind of reductionism of perhaps authentic, non-hoaxed anomalous phenomena to secret pranksters is, for me, its own version of paranoid thinking. Frankly, I think a fairly large percentage of the traditional scientific community, especially the strongly skeptical and in-denial part of it, is itself somewhat delusional about potentially legitimate anomalous goings-on that deserve serious investigation and consideration, not blithe dismissal with finger pointing to some mysterious covert group that is responsible for very worldly yet unknown reasons. So, because I have my own sense of the existence of reality-denying paranoid thinking going on in supposedly normal-minded mainstream circles, I am not so quick to dismiss or explain away out of hand the paranoid delusional sounding stories of individuals such as Edward.

Part of this perspective has its roots in my old Sethian background-- having read, over and over, everything Jane Roberts ever channeled from her source, Seth. That, along with many other threads of influence and interest, led me during 1987 to 1990 to work on a book project (still not finished) entitled, *The Imagining of God: A Study of How We Create Our Own Reality*. I really do live my life from the perspective that we actually do create our own reality, individually and en masse, each moment of existence. While I cannot get into this whole topic here, I think you can see how it can bear upon the area of clinical parapsychology, in general, and the case of Edward, in particular. If the entire consensus reality, together with our shared sense of what seems to be objective, physical reality external to our experiencing consciousness, is a kind of conjointly woven fabric of shared dream material, up out of the zero point energy vacuum or from wherever, and is a function of our pooled consciousness and energy systems, then the only thing that separates "reality," as we agree to it and co-constitute it in our shared, normal waking conscious states, from Edward's reality is the loneliness of Edward's world and the ability of us in the "normal" consensus reality, through our strength in number, to constantly reality test against our ongoing equally self-generated reality and verify and corroborate each other's stories, thus maintaining a stable shared story of the true nature of experienced reality.

Edward is trying to get others such as me to believe in and join him in his reality. The clinician who eventually may, and should, work with him, if Edward is willing, will seek to get him to re-join more and share the consensus reality of/with the rest of us and to agree to accept those aspects of his story, of his experienced reality, that are not able to be shared with or corroborated by others, as being his own personal reality creations. I prefer my reality, which is more congruent with the reigning consensus reality than with Edward's reality, because it does not have the degree of dark, sinister, secretive, manipulative, and fearful aspects that Edward's reality seems to have for him. I don't want the world to be the way Edward is making it out to be. But to say that he is not experiencing it precisely the way that he is, is to negate his very lived experience. Yes,

his life may be a lie compared to the consensus reality version, but it is not a lie given his own experience and interpretation. On the other hand, I can look at our present consensus reality and think of it as being something like Edward's story, and say, no, I do not choose that reality either. And does that then make me crazy?

I find it hard to understand why we humans must co-create our own conjoint reality in this way, and of this nature, over and over daily in this sideways purgatory of stunted possibilities, given the glimpses of a larger reality the anomalous gives us and given the idealistic visions we are benignly haunted by through our spiritual connection to Source. I can reality test against all of the surfaces of this local existence and say, yes, it is all quite real; but I can also reality test against other surfaces at other focal lengths of consciousness and at other reaches of human spirit and potential, and find that they yield me evidence of other, larger, and equally true, realities. And does that make me crazy? Perhaps the only difference between Edward and me is that I continue to function better in the consensus reality than he does, even as he and I both have our respective alternative stories of reality to supplement the consensus reality one. But, then, Edward also seems pretty functional to me. He's never been in a mental hospital. Somehow he's managed to take care of himself for 35 years or so in spite of all the tracking, spying, coercing, and torturing that he says, and that he appears to actually think, he's experienced.

I just have to remind myself that, although I do not believe in or care for many aspects of Edward's story of his reality, and although I cannot make his reality into the "real" reality, or bend the consensus reality to fit within his experience of reality, so do I at the same time have difficulty believing in or caring for many aspects of the current consensus reality, and I find myself refusing to make that reality the reality, as the only reality, for me.

In philosophical terms, I would call myself an ontological relativist. That is, I believe that the experienced nature of reality is a function of the frame of reference of the consciousness/energy system experiencing it, and that there are as many valid, objectively real realities as there are systems of individualized attending consciousness. A consensus reality is then comprised of enough similar-enough experiential reality-co-constituting energy/consciousnesses. The one Ground of All Being operates through active, subjective, consciousness, experiencing aspects of Itself interacting with seemingly passive, more objective systems that are being experienced, with both active and passive aspects being made of the one same underlying Universal Being/Substance/Spirit/Reality.

I believe that future clinical parapsychologists (or whatever else they may end up being called) will have to have a certain amount of the ontological relativist to them. Maybe the model is the cross-cultural counseling one: that, in order to truly understand and help fellow human spirits (or even other kinds of beings), one must meet them on their own terms and turf, in light of their own lived-world. One must at least start off there, although one may not want to stay there for too long. In addition, one will need to responsibly help that person dwell in his or her own world in the most functional and

least suffering way possible. But, in addition, one will need to help them to bridge from the world of their own cultural realm, their own lived world, to the larger, dominate world, to what I have been calling the consensus reality that is dominant at the time and of which one is currently a member, like it or not.

The trouble with being a too died-in-the-wool ontological relativist, however, is that you can step onto the shore of the strange Polynesian island or intolerable ghetto of another person's world, you can enter the Star Trek "holodeck" programmed by another person's cognitive infrastructural mental-representation-loaded belief, interpretation, and expectation structures and past-lived-experience core, and, if you acknowledge the authenticity, validity, and opportunity for living and learning presented by that reality, it might erode the bonds one has to the common consensus reality to which one must return if one is not to have one's life be overly isolated and unsharable. It might make it more difficult to return. And perhaps most importantly, by experiencing, and possibly by learning and growing from, alternative realities so fully, one may return to the consensus reality and realize that it too is a programmed holodeck affair.

Why do we then have this bias that, as you walk from the consensus reality onto the holodeck to experience a single person's lived experience, you see yourself going from the one real reality into an unreality, a subjective, self-generated (or technologically generated) realm, and going from the holodeck back into the main part of the ship, back into consensus reality, is going in the direction from subjective to objective, from the unreal to the real? Although I can agree that it is certainly the direction from private to public, and that the more public a reality is the more real it seems.

I hope that this extended metaphor of Star Trek's technological holographic-type reality-creating holodeck may shed some light on the complexity of the clinical parapsychologist's role. All realities may be created in the same fundamental manner, and we may need to examine our biases and preconceptions when we are faced with a fellow human being who is grounded in a different story than the usual one. I hope I am not simply turning the reality game inside out by declaring that crazy people are sane and sane people are crazy, or that the main reality most of us agree to is some kind of made-up fantasy land. No. But it is made up in a certain kind of way that is very much the same as Edward's process. The difference lies in how many people have the same common grounds for how they made, and continue to make up, their reality such that the result is a shared story of a certain kind, and from that sufficiently similar shared frame of reference, other realities, other lived experiences, are deemed unreal or just self-generated. Hell, the whole consensus reality is made up too, I firmly believe, and it is quite plastical and subject to transformation, hopefully for the better. But then, I just might be a little bit crazy, don't you think?

I will say that I do not like realities that are fear-based, that have the characteristic that Edward's story has. I won't vote for that reality, if I have a choice. But then, I can look at our present world and say I don't want to really vote for that reality either, at least not for the many aspects of it that are equally fear based, equally shut off from larger and better truths and possibilities. I am left to look to the next century and millennium, wondering

just how firm and invariant our consensus reality is liable to stay as the extraterrestrial and interdimensional presence becomes more obvious, as the anomalies increase across the public sector, as the role of consciousness looms ever larger in our scientific paradigm shift, and as the reality of the inner planes, the after life, and the essential spiritual nature of the universe, make themselves ever more apparent to more and more of us.

Clinical Parapsychology and the Politics of Consciousness:

Some Final Speculations

In ethnographic research terms, we are all "participant observers" here on Earth. Like anthropologists doing field research, we have been left off in this odd land to study it even as we become a part of it. According to the perennial philosophy, we are here to have these experiences of our lives in order to learn and grow, to evolve our spirits across numerous lifetimes of this study of life, until we get it right, until we understand the Universe and our true relationship with it, until we understand God and God's will and ways and our true relationship with It, including our own eventual God consciousness and identity. Or if that is too overblown, we study life until we find the ultimate truths of existence, the mythic laws of Nature, including of our own human nature, and of our own respective unique selves.

So, let's compare notes. Let's ask each other: What have you learned about life so far? What's your life been like? But, specifically, what have we each learned, if anything, about the psychic, non-ordinary, and otherworldly side of life? Let's compare notes about the unusual experiences we have each had-- the anomalous, the paranormal.

Many of us like to compare notes about the weird things, the unusual, the inexplicable, things that go off the end of the map, things that, frankly, give us some hope that there actually may be more to reality than the local consensus reality; that there really may be a shift occurring in the fundamental nature of our experienced reality, a revolution in what and how we understand about the nature of the Universe, especially about its non-physical aspects, its higher-dimensional, subtler energy, inner-planes realities more inclusive than just its reductionist materialism and behaviorism full of ghost-less machines.

I believe it is time for a new, national poll or survey to be conducted in order to find out how many of us are having what kinds of paranormal and otherworldly experiences I have been talking about, and to also discover what kinds of help such experiencers may have sought or wished that they had available to them with regard to these unusual experiences. I know there have been some fairly recent polls, but they have not been enough; they have not asked the right questions, or asked enough questions, or asked enough people.

My hunch is that there may be a great many people out there having some very interesting, anomalous experiences, but we have had no way to tap that experience base in a really substantial way in order to better know if many of the things my note-

comparing friends and I have been experiencing and speculating about are true of the larger population, and, possibly, true of reality itself. One of the most prevalent critical responses to New Age theory and practice is that it is a special case sub-cultural anomaly in and of itself, sociologically speaking; and that, meantime, the vast majority of us human beings keep chugging along, supposedly content with the materialist consensus reality and the tremendous constraints it places on our own potential and on what can be experienced as real.

I believe we on Earth are in the midst of what I call an all-pervading "politics of consciousness" along with its companion, a "politics of knowledge." There is a tremendous contending of forces going on today that is vying, so to speak, for our vote. Our vote, in this metaphor, is how we each existentially and experientially contribute, moment to moment, to a particular way of seeing and co-constituting our consensus reality so that it is either more in keeping with the platform of one or the other of the major parties. In this now-extended metaphor, the political parties are, essentially, materialism, fear, selfishness, mere survival, and a stunted view of human nature and the Universe, on the one hand, and a more mental, spiritual, multi-dimensional, potential-filled reality, on the other hand. A lot of this process of political forces or parties contending for our vote is taking place on a very covert and unconscious level. It is the proverbial war between good and evil coming to a head in our lifetimes: the war in Heaven, the war within. It is the age-old war being waged within each of us, waged between the forces of the sacred and the profane; the trans-physical and the physical-only; between the freedom for the divine birthright creative potential in each of us to explore itself, and the controlling, curtailing, ignorance-maintaining loyal opposition counter force to such.

I believe there are forces both conscious and unconscious, human and otherwise, physically embodied and otherwise, that are battling at present for which way the human race goes on its evolutionary path. At the same time, a paradigm shift is slowly but surely occurring in our scientific understandings and practices. I even contend that the very nature of the reality that we are experiencing is in a process of transformation: The very consensus reality within which we are embedded and to which we all contribute and co-constitute, is changing day by day, little by little, from a materialist base to a more multi-dimensional-- what I call a post-dualist-- nature wherein what were once termed internal and external reality are becoming more inter-penetrated and confounded. Inner reality is becoming more like outer reality and outer reality is becoming more like inner reality. Eventually we will need new post-dualist terms and concepts to deal with what I am talking about, let alone to do a new kind of science and technology with regard to all this. I cannot begin to do justice here to the sea-change that's going on as part of this whole evolutionary movement we are being carried along within; but suffice it to say that I will stake my life on its reality.

Nonetheless, it would help to get some ammunition (such as a new survey might provide) to support the cause, to shed light on the fact that millions of Americans may indeed be partaking, at least on occasion, of a larger, more complex reality than hitherto fore thought credible.

Have you been wondering why there is such a concerted effort by so many institutions, agencies, and vested interests, including the media, to play down or dismiss out of hand for tens of millions of Americans the resurgent perennial philosophy insights present in the so-called New Age movement of the past few decades? I don't know what smacks more of the politics of consciousness metaphor I have been using than to have the New Age be portrayed, over and over as it is being portrayed stereotypically, as being not only inconsequential and of no real value, but of being the work of the devil, of very worldly and selfish forces. Anyone who knows the tenets of this movement know this portrayal to be not only generally untrue but to be usually 180 degrees out of phase with what is really the case, since the perennial philosophy and much of the psi-related and other non-ordinary experiences associated with it are exactly about the unselfish, the non-materialistic/non-worldly, about the truly spiritual, not about the inverse of it, as portrayed. Such portrayals begin to sound like the smear TV ads during political campaigns: "For God's sake, don't vote for that!" And look at which party has the inordinate portion of the money and other resources to run such ads that most influence the unwitting voter.

At the same time, let me hasten to add that entering into the realms of the paranormal, the occult, the magical, the shaman's world, the interdimensional, the larger, more complex and otherworldly reality, especially when done in relative ignorance and without sufficient self-knowledge and spiritual growth on one's own part, can indeed involve the shadow side, the forces of fear, selfishness, the profane, totalitarian control, and so on; but that need not be the case if education and soul growth go hand in hand with opening to such larger realms of experience and reality.

If a major survey of the kind I have briefly described could be designed, funded, and carried out, its findings could make a considerable difference within the current politics of consciousness and knowledge. Such a poll's results could change, in the minds and hearts of many of us, what is real and possible and believable, and, equally importantly, could change what is able to be opened to experientially, what could be acted upon, not just believed in. The survey's results, if they turn out to be as I hypothesize them, could effect a lot of votes. The changed balance of how some of us are voting each instant--voting by means of our world-view, our being-in-the-world, our state of consciousness, by means of the reality-creating multidimensional psychoenergetic system we each are and emanate, just might help change that which we experience as our consensus reality. For, in spite of who may be thought to be in control of things these days, I believe that--in the ultimate sense of channeling that I most trust-- we are each, to widely varying degrees, connected to the omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and omnibenevolence of our Infinite Creator, and the truth of this connection, this identity relation to our Universal Source, can set us free on a path to a more full realization of our potential as offspring expressions of our Creator able to tap the wondrous gifts of that parental ground of being responsible for all that is.