

SOME REFLECTIONS ON PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENA AND
THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

Introduction

1. Prompted by the 23 JAN 73 Stanford Research Institute (SRI) presentation of experiments with Ingo SWANN and Uri GELLER and by an earlier paper on "Direct Brain Perception/Action" which was prepared by Dr Henry PUHARICH and Captain Edgar MITCHELL, this paper: briefly discusses the background concerning the SWANN-GELLER phenomena; analyzes the three basic questions which are suggested by these purported phenomena; outlines the author's limited knowledge of the Agency's current position and involvement as regards this field; and makes some basic recommendations concerning possible courses of action.

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Background

2. Since stenographic notes were taken during the 23 Jan 73 SRI presentation and since a verbatim record can be obtained from [REDACTED] of OSI (ext 4035), this paper will not attempt to render an account of the session. It is sufficient to note that the presentation consisted of descriptions, a film, slides and extensive question-and-answer exchanges on SRI's recent and continuing experiments with Ingo SWANN and Uri GELLER--covering a broad spectrum of purported parapsychological phenomena and focusing particularly on: ESP ("P" in both the perception and projection sense); telekinetics; clairvoyance; and the perturbation/stressing/distortion of metals and fields of energy by apparently paranormal (paraphysical/parapsychological) means. As presented by the three SRI researchers and their 20 minute film of GELLER, there would appear to have been an incredibly high order of consistent performance in these areas--IF one accepts as being above reproach both the credentials and the motivation of the SRI representatives and if one accepts the efficacy of their laboratory controls and their statistical analysis of the data.

3. From some of the questioning during the session and remarks overhead later, it was clear that a fair proportion of the approximately 20 observers entertained some doubts concerning controls and/or analysis. But the doubts appeared to be mostly, if not entirely, matters of degree and of personal preference in terms of methodology--and were tempered by understanding of the relatively short lead-time and facilities available to SRI. Most of those present appeared to accept, as a working hypothesis,

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the presence of some undefined paranormal phenomena and none appeared disposed, even privately, to question the honesty of the SRI representatives. My own impressions were that, while GELLER's powers seem to have been attenuated by the laboratory controls (as compared with the claims made in Dr PUHARICH's paper), substantial indications of some extraordinary power or talent remained. And, for what it may be worth, I felt that the SRI representatives were essentially honest in their approach-- although , being human and in need of financial support to pursue their investigations, perhaps somewhat self-serving in the selection and manner of presentation of their data.

Three Basic Questions for the Intelligence Community

4. The focus of this paper, however, is broader than this one incident. The whole field of paranormal phenomena suggests three pragmatic and fundamental questions to which the intelligence community should address itself:

WOULD there be SIGNIFICANT potential for the intelligence community?

DOES it exist?

WHAT is it?

As posed, the questions may seem too obvious or naive but I believe there is some virtue in initially viewing the issue in these simplistic terms and in that order--i. e. , judgement, measurement and theorem. Obviously this break-down is artificial in many respects : for instance, the first question cannot be answered definitively until the last question is answered; and , hopefully, one should construct his approach to the second question ('whether') so as to be obtaining, at the same time, evidence appropriate to the third ('what'). But the paranormal field is so delicate, so suspect and so potentially explosive that only the most orderly of plebian approaches seems likely to survive in the bureaucratic atmosphere--no matter what the 'reality' or the 'evidence' may prove to be. So let us examine these questions in more detail.

5. If we establish to our complete satisfaction that such paranormal phenomena DO exist, would there be SIGNIFICANT potential for application by the intelligence community in the national interest? This question is, I believe, more complex than it appears on the surface. While there is little doubt that (particularly if we consider our defensive responsibilities concerning foreign capabilities in this field) we could safely answer 'yes' in the abstract, we ought to be quite pragmatic about it from the outset. No matter how interesting the field might be to us as individuals or how fraught with significance for society or humanity as a whole, as an Agency our only justification for involvement

would be on the basis of demonstrable utility in : the collection or interpretation of 'intelligence' on foreign powers; the recruitment of sources leading to that end; the conceiving and conducting of physical/psychological/paranormal activities and programs designed to influence or constrain the attitudes/actions/capabilities of foreign powers and/or their leaders to our advantage; or the enhancement of the abilities of our (i. e., loosely 'U. S. ') personnel to accomplish any of the above by heightening their inter- and intra-personal powers --whether in a truly paranormal mode or not. There are several aspects to this overall question.

a. The Purported Powers. Holding in abeyance for a moment the question of 'whether' and limiting the discussion to GELLER (since the most impressive evidence, the film, was on him and since his claimed powers are broader than SWANN's), we have apparent instances of : mind-reading (primarily of perhaps solely numbers and names of cities) with over 90% accuracy and few baulks; mind projection (where he 'forces' the researchers to name a city previously written-down by him) with apparently a high order of accuracy (no statistical data, merely anecdotal); perception of unseen, simple line drawings (apparently 100% accuracy); limited stressing/distortion of metals after prolonged physical contact but evidently far beyond normal physical powers; limited but consistent (though not, apparently, predictable in nature) effect on electric and magnetic energy fields when in close (almost touching) proximity to them; long-distance telephone perception of simple designs or letters (anecdotal); detecting presence or absence of metals or water in sealed containers without touching them (100% accuracy and two baulks out of 12 attempts); perception of uppermost die-faces in sealed box on 'double-blind' basis (100% accuracy and two baulks in 12 attempts); perception of a road (while driving blindfolded at high speeds), allegedly through the eyes of his heroic companions (anecdotal); and several other anecdotal episodes of similar natures. While it would stretch no one's imagination to create specific operational scenarios (e. g., recruitment of a given Soviet) in which these manifestations could be highly useful, that would also be true if we were only dealing with a highly skillful magician. The real question is : IF there is a paranormal force at work here how could we most appropriately and effectively employ it to our long-range advantage ? Because (again, IF) we would then be posed on the threshold of modes of perception/communication/interaction which transcend our present understanding of physical laws and of man's nature and of a new awareness and discoveries which would dwarf the phenomena themselves. It is in this context that we should address ourselves to the

question of what significance such phenomena might have for our interests--and this
be
can best/done only if related to the most realistic futurology projections of the intel-
ligence community's (read, effectively, the nation's) needs/roles/resources/envirom-
ments in the next 5-to-15 and 15-to-25 years. Even if GELLER can do what he claims
and even if he were a fully cleared staff officer, we would, I submit, be hard-pressed
to use him appropriately at the present time. As noted, the question of utility is more
complex than it appears on the surface and deserves early and serious thought.

b. Transferability. IF the phenomena exists, its utility for our purposes would be
in direct proportion to the degree to which the skills could be learned or the powers
acquired or developed by appropriate persons--and the ddgree to which we could develop
systems for identifying people with the essential attributes. In the hands of a GELLER,
certainly, these powers can do us very little good--and possibly quite a bit of harm.
IF the phenomena exist, they must be in some sense (though, perhaps, in a sense which
eludes our current frame of reference) a function of man's nature and his environment;
that is, the potential must exist in some degree in all men. Just as some men are born
color-blind, it might be that some are genetically deprived of their 'psi' sense; and it
might also be that the latent capacity is so attenuated in the vast majority as to be
effectively useless. But the basic assumption must be that what some men can do other
can do. The issue would be : how to identify the latent capacity and how to surface/
perfect/control it. For instance, 100% accuracy in ESPing numbers is impressive (even
if we are 'only' witnessing hypersensitive voice-box readings) but can this facility be
perfected to 'read' attitudes/intents/emotions? When I asked this question re GELLER
the SRI response was 'yes' but they admit that they have not begun to investigate this
phenomenon. These and other questions relating to identification and transferability
have a direct bearing on the utility question.

c. Control/Predictability/Motivation. Obviously, the phenomena will be useful
for our purposes only if there^{is} a certain minimal degree of reliability associated with
its functioning at our behest, in our environment and for our purposes. Here we get
into the esoteric realm of the 'motivation' of the forces at work and it is difficult to
conceive of such 'forces' having parochial interests--though it is relatively easy to
believe that their agents (GELLER et al) might be psychologically inhibited by their
own subjective attributions in this respect. Indeed, virtually all known mystics (in-
cluding GELLER and SWANN) have claimed to be affected by motivational auras in
their
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(assuming we come to accept the existence of the phenomena) crank this factor into the 'utility' equation.

6. DO we have incontrovertible evidence of the existence of LEGITIMATE (i. e., as-professed paranormal) phenomena? There is no doubt that something happens but if we are merely confronted with highly skilled and ingenious practitioners of 'normal' arts there is no broad significance in it for us--although, again, I can easily imagine practical operational uses on a case-by-case basis (and in the event of negative paranormal conclusions this aspect might well deserve limited exploration with the operational elements). In any case, I don't believe that even the SRI representatives would disagree with the statement that we DO NOT have such evidence at this time. Certainly there are highly suggestive indications, particularly in the ESP field (and some provocative possibilities in other fields), but there is no INCONTROVERTIBLE evidence. And, moreover, as matters now stand, we are not going to get such evidence from SRI. Even if appropriate individuals in the bureaucracy go on record as stating that they fully accept SRI's willingness and competence to institute new and iron-clad control and analysis procedures, the bureaucracy as a whole would not (properly, in my estimation) accept positive findings from them as definitive evidence in a matter of this magnitude. I do not question their honesty but, being so closely identified with the experiments (historically, financially and emotionally), their findings would never, in the final analysis, be accepted as unbiased--however unbiased they might, in fact, be. If we are serious about the effort we might as well spare ourselves the time and expense of another intermediary step. This doesn't mean that SRI should be cut out of the picture (even if they could be, which is doubtful) but, rather, that we reconsider the nature/mode/degree of our involvement. I see the purposes and options as follows--
^{would} and have some reason to believe (though am far from sure) that SRI_A follow our lead if we doubled our current investment (ca 52K) in the next project year.

a. Options. Basically, there are two functional options: we can (on an Agency- or community-wide basis) meticulously structure the laboratory controls, the specific nature and sequence of investigations and the precise statistical-analytical procedures and give them to SRI to comply with--with spot-monitoring by our representative(s); or we can, having done our homework, have the procedures carried out under the full-time supervision of our representative(s)--either in the SRI installation or (with the SRI representatives) in a more convenient installation of our choice. For the obvious reason that the first option would still leave room for doubt by honest skeptics, the

second option is so far preferable as to almost invalidate the 'option' concept. As for the choice of subjects, the project should be sufficiently flexible as to exploit any truly useful ones who become available--but the major programmed emphasis should be on SWANN. He is not only more readily accessible and available but he is also, evidently, much easier and more predictable to work with and appears to be genuinely interested, himself, in getting at the root of the phenomena; also, of especial significance for our purposes, his powers seem to have been deliberately cultivated in the recent past and are perhaps more amenable to analysis for that reason. (NOTE: Should SWANN become the focal point this would also provide a more acceptable rationale for SRI's, ostensibly, renting new facilities on the East coast since he resides in New York--and, although I'm not clear on this, the maintaining of such 'cover' vis a vis SWANN may still be necessary.) GELLER is neither available (at least not predictably so) nor very cooperative--and his motivation seems clearly to be image-building and financial rather than scientific. Nonetheless, to the extent that he might be available, carefully thought-out procedures/controls/investigations should be structured in advance for him. Only a word or so about our representative(s): the need for well-qualified, wholly unbiassed and benignly (though hard-headedly) skeptical people is paramount--and it is likely that several representatives (all equally acceptable to their peers) should be used throughout the year on a random-repetitive basis.

b. Purposes. Simply stated, they are to measure 'whether' and to theorize as to 'what'--and, obviously, the series of investigations should be designed so that the two are mutually supportive in a coherent continuum having the characteristics of progressive and rational elimination. Since the details of design would be the subject of exhaustive deliberation by the body which paragraphs ^{10 AND 11} (below) recommends be formed, there is no point in trying to anticipate the substance at this time. But it should be made clear that, in addition to controls/investigation/analyses of the phenomena, a major purpose should also be an exhaustive examination (medical/psychiatric/behavioral/cognitive/philosophic/biographic) of the subject himself. This is another reason why SWANN is more appropriate for focus.

7. What are the mechanics or the dynamics of the force or natural law lying behind the phenomena (when and if accepted as valid)? Without belaboring the point, this is obviously the crux of the matter--for only with such understanding will we be able to assess transferability and control and begin to grapple with optimum utility. It might

be wiser to stop here, short of science-fiction speculation, but readership that has come thus far is presumably broad-minded enough to take the following in the spirit intended. Let me state simply that I, at the present time, neither believe nor disbelieve in the phenomena--although I must frankly admit that, like many others, I find myself essentially disposed (philosophically/emotionally) in favor of the proposition that what we have so far learned about the nature of man and his environment compares poorly (qualitatively, at least) with what we have yet to ~~\$\$\$~~ learn. Probabilistically, then, I find it easier to believe that there might be phenomena in this general ~~\$\$\$~~ area which we do not understand than that there are not. Whether GELLER and SWANN et al are in control of such phenomena or whether they are even pointing at the right phenomena, is another question. But if one views the long history of reported parapsychological phenomena (so greatly obscured by the cultists and charlatans who have tried to exploit it for both good and bad reasons) it becomes virtually impossible to deny that at least some people to some degree have or can develop and employ sensory and/or motor energies which are, effectively, paranormal insofar as the 'normal' individual cannot or does not employ them. That this natural human propensity, the willingness to believe, is the bedrock of the magician's trade I don't deny for one moment--and I am quite prepared to accept the hypothesis that, in part at least, we are being victimized in this respect by GELLER. From the reported data I am inclined to think that this is less likely to be the case with SWANN. In any case I do believe that, if these or other phenomena ~~#####~~ withstand the rigors of competent scientific investigation, man is bound eventually to perceive that the reality lying behind them is wholly rational. This is not to say that they might not have great mystical or religious significance for mankind but, if so, it will come as a consequence of better understanding of the reality we now perceive--as well, perhaps, as the perception of new dimensions of reality. Should this come about, there will be an unprecedented upheaval in the values/affairs/attitudes/relationships of mankind--and, in a crassly parochial sense, those who are on the leading-edge of such new perceptions will be much better prepared to survive the turbulent transition to the new matrices of societal values and organization.

Limited Impressions Concerning Current Community Involvement & Intentions

8. There probably are a number of other Agency or community elements engaged (or, at least, with legitimate interests) in this area but my current understanding of the involvement and/or intentions is as follows.

of 2K to supplement the early investigations of GELLER and 50K to support SRI for one year (recently begun) of investigations of SWANN; while TSD is reputed to have been impressed by the recent presentations, I have no idea what their short- or long-range hopes/purposes/intentions are or the nature of the precise exploitation they have in mind. (NOTE: I am having lunch with C/TSD on 26 JAN and may have more insights in these areas afterwards.)

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b. DDS&T/OSI : although [redacted] was apparently instrumental in arranging the recent presentation and has apparently dealt with SRI extensively, I believe that OSI has not provided funds for the investigations and does not intend to do so; they see their only legitimate interest as being an analysis of the threat potential in the hands of other powers and do not believe that basic research in this area is consistent with their responsibilities.

c. DDS&T/ORD: I believe that ORD has not provided any funds for the investigations and that its role has been limited to that of interested observers.

d. OMS/Office of Security/Office of Commo all have obvious, though currently marginal, functional interests but have played only monitoring roles thus far and, apparently, have no intention of providing funds.

e. Non-Agency : DOD (ARPA) and NSA are alleged to have considerable interest in the area and have had some limited dealings with SRI (including the recent presentations) but, despite a number of false starts, have apparently put no funds into the project and do not intend to do so; at least one reason appears to be the difficulty and/or potential embarrassment associated with justifying the expenditures to Congress; ARPA representatives are said to have stated recently that they accept SRI's motivation but believe they are being 'taken' by GELLER.

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9. It is my understanding (per [redacted]) that SRI, far from resisting our substantive involvement in the investigations, has 'pled' for the USG to design and run the entire investigative procedure--certainly as regards SWANN and possibly GELLER as well. But they would, no doubt, want the investigations to be done under their ~~auspices~~ auspices--and, at least until we know more about the attitudes of GELLER /SWANN and about the cover being employed, this would probably be preferable. One of SRI's problems appears to be the fact that their basic research program is in LASER; the parapsychological involvement seems to have come about largely by chance and any in-depth or prolonged program in this direction could be done only by sacrificing their momentum and commitments in the LASER field. The recent presentations were

this adjustment--and whether the necessary 50 to 75K would be forthcoming. The SRI representatives are apparently going to remain in the Washington area until 29 January in the hopes that further exploratory discussions are desired.

Recommendations

10. It is recommended that, should further discussions with SRI bear out the above assumptions concerning their willingness to accept our design and controls and the permanent presence of our representative(s), ORD undertake to supply the balance of the funds for a one-year project and arrange with TSD for joint management of the project. (NOTE: There has apparently been some talk, by ARPA and NSA, about a community-wide consortium for such an undertaking but it is believed that this would be unnecessarily cumbersome--although community-wide in-put at appropriate stages, see below, would be essential.) In the event that there is general (ORD/TSD/SRI) agreement in principle, it is recommended that we negotiate for a one or two month delay in the beginning of the project year. This would be essential (even if at some extra cost) so that Agency and community representatives could structure a design for the project year which would satisfy all requirements and, in the event of positive conclusions, be above reproach.

11. It is further recommended that, upon reaching such an agreement, a Parapsych Steering Panel be formed immediately--with one voting member each (plus optional non-voting observers) from the following elements: DDP/TSD; DDS&T/ORD; DDS&T/OSI; OMS; Office of Security; Office of Communications; and each of the following 'hard-SG1H target' operational components: [REDACTED] In calling for the establishment of the panel, the chiefs of the various components should be encouraged to designate individuals of appropriate background/interests/temperament. The panel, chaired jointly (or on a rotating basis) by TSD and ORD, would naturally define its own working procedures but it would be useful to consider establishing immediately a series of Working Groups to prepare basic position papers for the Panel's consideration on a number of areas:

- a. laboratory controls to be implemented;
- b. the precise nature and sequence of investigations to be run;
- c. testing-controls of environment and the individual to be run during the phenomena;
- d. medical/behavioral/psychiatric/psychological/biographical testing and research to be done on the side of the investigations;

e. procedures for collecting/storing/analyzing all statistical data related to the investigations;

f. security procedures;

g. management procedures--e.g., locale, choice and rotation of supervisors, as well as SOPs for their performance;

h. utility forecasts--e.g., futurology projections and operational pragmatics.

As soon as the Panel has acceptable working drafts in each of these areas they (perhaps on a relatively selective basis) should be submitted to the appropriate non-agency elements with a legitimate interest and some potential for contribution--this should probably include (but not necessarily be limited to) NSA and ARPA. External responses to these papers would then be considered by the ~~Panel~~ Panel in the preparation of its detailed Project Proposal for the consideration of C/ORD and C/TSD (and, as deemed appropriate, higher authority). In the interim, basic and undisputed aspects of the design could be discussed with SRI so that appropriate adjustments could be made in their installation (or, variously, so that a new installation could be found), so that upon approval the investigations could proceed without undue delay. And, finally, the Panel should focus on all likely requirements for extraordinary experts/gear/facilities that are apt to be encountered during the project and, in an appendix to its basic Proposal, should identify those available (already cleared) and should suggest appropriate action for locating and (in the appropriate cover context) contacting the remainder--so that, at some critical juncture, the entire project won't be stalled for want of reasonable foresight.