

PARAPSYCHOLOGY IN PERSPECTIVE

The subject of parapsychological research and experiments, especially in the context of potential intelligence or military applications, consists of two dominant subdivisions of the psychic phenomena -- extrasensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK).

Extrasensory perception includes topics such as telepathy, precognition, retrocognition and clairvoyance. The primary subject of this report deals with a category of psychoenergetics generally under the umbrella of clairvoyance, but specifically known as remote viewing (RV).

Remote viewing has been defined as an alleged ability by a person to sense information about a site, location, or person removed from any known sensory link. It has also been described as the acquisition of information not presented to any obvious sense; a perceptual process that acts as information input to the human subject.

Psychokinesis, on the other hand, does not refer to perception, but rather to a palpable disturbance of, or interaction with, a psychological or biological system -- spontaneous or deliberate. Thus, it is the production of physical effects not mediated by any obvious mechanism. These are, therefore, perturbation processes that appear as an action output from a human subject.

It is helpful to divide¹ the field of psychokinesis according to the magnitude of the energy transferred. For example, there are the so-called macroscopic PK effects, such as the spoon bending exercises of Uri Geller^{2,3}, the salt-shaker levitations of the Russian woman, Kalagina⁴, and the self-levitations of the Frenchman, Girard.⁵ These have been very highly publicized, but to the best of our knowledge have evaded well-controlled, systematic experimentation.

Then there are PK experiments which involve much smaller amounts of energy transfer, where the effects are made evident by an inherently high gain in the experimental design itself. For example, magnetometers normally used for the detection of weak magnetic fields are very sensitive to slight displacement of their spools², certain types of torsional pendula can transcribe infinitesimal forces into measurable deflection of a light beam⁶, electronic strain gauges routinely used for measuring propagation of elastic and plastic waves in solids can be used to detect very small disturbances of solid objects.³

Next, there is the so-called microscopic PK domain, where one is attempting to intervene at the atomic or nuclear scale of a physical system: to influence a radioactive decay process, for example, or the emission of an optical photon, or the atomic collision processes in a gas discharge.⁷ These are the sorts of processes involved in most of the random generator devices, one version of which is now in the process of design at SRI.

In the course of reviewing and discussing research and related activities in the parapsychological field, one most often merges both the RV and PK areas into one topic without specific distinction as to phenomena, scientific curiosity or potential application. The facts are that the functional definitions of RV and PK (as described above) are substantially different and that to date there exists no theory or even plausible concept which claims to associate one phenomena with the other; this also applies to the transfer of claimed skills in either areas. There exists no conceptual hint or scientific hunch as to how the knowledge or talent in RV, for instance, might be related to that of PK or how the various fields of PK are related to each other.

We suspect that the overriding criteria for interest in PK research (beyond curiosity) are due to the fact that physical systems are involved in the interactions, and we understand how to deal with them more precisely than when dealing with psychological phenomena. These are basically hands-off experiments, frequently involving a number of disciplines of several basic sciences to which we have grown accustomed in more conventional engineering tasks.

In summary, the uniform treatment of all parapsychological activities, PK & RV, on the assumption that they could eventually fit into one scientific or technical discipline can serve only to detract from gaining further insight into the phenomena and dilute our understanding of the observed effects. Specifically, there is no evidence or conceptual notion which provides a basis for assuming that any further understanding of PK will help explain the RV process (or vice versa), or make remote viewing more reliable and repeatable.

References

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