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Charles T. Tart

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REMOTE VIEWING FOR EVERYBODY*

TARG, Russell, and HARARY, Keith, The Mind Race: Understanding and Using Psychic Abilities.
New York: Villard Books, 1984; 294 pp.

In 1980 I was able to take a year's leave of absence from my teaching duties at the University of California and spend the time as a consultant on parapsychological research at the Stanford Research Institute in Menlo Park, Calif. (It has since changed its name to SRI International, something which is still confusing to many people.) Physicists Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ, working with Ingo Swann, the well-known artist and psychic, had developed a very successful style of psychic functioning that they termed "remote viewing." Targ and Puthoff's 1977 book, Mind Reach: Scientists Look at Psychic Ability, was widely read and made remote viewing a household word among people following parapsychological research.

I have known Targ and Puthoff for several years and informally consulted with them about remote viewing many times, but my year of full time involvement in all aspects of remote viewing experiments made this method of psychic functioning even more impressive to me.

Remote viewing experiments are straightforward. Before the experiment, an experimenter (called the "target pool picker") does a lot of driving around until they have picked a large number (say 60) of interesting places to visit that are within a 20-minute drive of the laboratory. An "interesting" target site should be visually or aesthetically interesting, and the various target sites that are picked should be distinct from one another: If you get them mixed up when you can actually look at them, why should psychic functioning be any better?

* This review has been adapted, with permission, from an article entitled "Psychic Functioning: California Casual Style," which appeared in the May 1984 issue of The Open Mind. Information about The Open Mind is available from P.O. Box 371, El Cerrito, CA 94530. - Ed.

Now we have a target pool, to which we add a "viewer," an "experimenter," and a "beacon person." To carry out a remote viewing session, the three people will meet each other and get acquainted. Then the beacon person will leave the other two and go to the target pool picker, who, using a random number generator, will give the beacon person a sealed envelope. After leaving the laboratory, the beacon person opens this envelope, which tells them which target site he/she is to be at in half an hour. The beacon person regulates his/her driving to get there precisely on time.

Meanwhile the viewer and a second experimenter (sometimes referred to in the literature with the descriptive but awkward term "inbound experimenter") have been relaxing in a casual, ordinary way, perhaps discussing the weather or politics, perhaps glancing at a magazine, perhaps taking five minutes to lie down. At the time the beacon person is supposed to arrive at the target site the experimenter turns on a tape recorder and asks the viewer to describe whatever impressions he/she can obtain about the appearance of the target site where the beacon person is. The viewer can also sketch his images if he wishes.

The beacon person at the target site does what people naturally do at such a site. If it's a playground, she will play. If it's a MacDonalds, she will buy and eat a hamburger; if it's a church, she will pray for the success of the experiment. The beacon person does this for a fixed viewing period, usually 15 or 20 minutes.

Back at the laboratory the viewer has closed his eyes and is describing any impressions he gets. Most impressions are visual: "a red, curving shape, seems very large. . ." would be an example. Some might be auditory ("a place with a lot of echoes") or in other sensory modalities, such as tactile ("rough textures"), or emotional reactions ("fearful, hurried here"). The experimenter may occasionally question the viewer to clarify impressions ("Is the red thing related to the machine--like device you described a minute ago?" "What would this place look like from above?").

At the end of the viewing period the beacon person leaves the target site and drives back to the laboratory. All three people then drive back out to the target site so the viewer can get fast feedback on how accurate his impressions were, and get some ideas on how to improve his remote viewing next time.

The viewer's, experimenter's, and beacon person's impressions of the accuracy of the remote viewing can be quite subjective, of course, but these impressions have nothing to do with the formal evaluation of a remote viewing experiment. Although objective evaluation of a single remote viewing is very difficult, it is straightforward for a series of remote viewings. An independent, outside judge is brought in for this. The judge is handed a set of traveling instructions for getting to a series of target sites that have been used in an experiment (typically 6), along with transcripts of the viewer's impressions and his drawings of the series of target sites. Since these are arranged in random order, the judge's task is to try to match a description with the target site it was intended to be for.

The judge's matching is the test of psychic functioning. If a viewer has no psychic functioning but gives lots of generalities ("I get an impression of blueness way above and great solidity down below"), a judge will find this a perfect description of any and all target sites. If the viewer's psychic abilities are functioning well, though, he may say (I quote from actual records), "... a large circular building with a white dome. . ." when describing one site and "... cement depression - as if a dry fountain - cement post in the middle or inside. . ." These were taken from a long distance series. A judge would have little trouble in matching the first description to the Louisiana Superdome (the actual target) and the second one to a dry cement pool in Washington Square, New York City. Statistical techniques decide if there is enough of a match to reject coincidence. Four correct matches in a series of six viewings, for example, would occur by chance less than 1 in 20 times, and so is statistically significant. Often the descriptions are so good that the formal statistical

evaluation seems like gilding on the lily, as when a marina target is described right from the start as:

"What I'm looking at is a little boat jetty or a little boat dock along the bay. . . Yeah, I see the little boats, some motor launches, some little sailing ships. . ."

It is very intriguing to note that precognitive remote viewing seems to work about as well as present-time remote viewing. The instructions are to describe the place the beacon person will be tomorrow, for a geographical target site. If remote viewing of an object is desired, the viewer is asked to describe the object that will be put in his hand at some future time. In both cases, the target site or object has not yet been selected.

Personal experience can be more convincing than abstract statistics. I recall a small meeting of parapsychologists at my home in the late 1970s. Targ and Puthoff not only talked about their remote viewing studies, they carried out an experiment on the spot. Elizabeth Kauscher had already selected a target pool. She left the house: we knew she would randomly choose a place from her (to us) unknown target pool and be there in 15 minutes. I did not try to formally remote view the target, but just listened to the person designated as the viewer trying to describe it. I was following my own imagery which I hoped might be about it. Suddenly a strong image popped into my mind, unexpected to me and unrelated to what the viewer was describing. I saw a brightly lit interior, as if I were looking in an open garage door, and there were many round devices in a row to the right, making noise, some sort of machines. Then the image disappeared. I thought it might be an auto repair garage or something like that.

When we visited the target site later that evening, I found myself standing on the street looking through a large, plate glass window into the brightly lit interior of a laundromat! When I stood at just the right spot, the round, noisy washing machines filled my view just as they had in the image. I was impressed with remote viewing!

Remote viewing experiments have been consistently successful at SRI International, and at several other laboratories, but not universally successful. What is the secret of successful remote viewing?

In their very important book, The Mind Race: Understanding and Using Psychic Abilities, Russell Targ and Keith Harary share their understandings of what makes the success in this area. Harary adds a great deal to Targ's experimental perspective, as he is not only an accomplished remote viewer himself but, as a counselor, has extensive experience in the misconceptions people have about psychic functioning.

Our culture has many negative stereotypes about psychic functioning. Targ and Harary point out that movies, for example, have pictured "psychics" as beautiful witches (as in Bell, Book and Candle), as outsiders (Carrie or Scanners), as people with dangerous secrets, as aliens (Forbidden Planet), as primitive (The Last Wave), and as people involved in trails of death (The Eyes of Laura Mars) and the supernatural (Poltergeist). They see this as not just passively misleading but as actively inhibiting the use of psi and contributing to neurotic and pathological ideas about it.

Every culture has its myths that shape the day-to-day functioning of our minds. Our culture has changed so rapidly, however, that many of these myths are now obstacles. Targ and Harary believe that psychic functioning is not only useful in everyday life, but in the way it demands we stretch our beliefs about our possibilities:

"We believe that the ultimate importance of psychic functioning is its ability to help us develop a deeper understanding of who we are, and what our relationship is to one another and to the rest of nature. . . it allows us to transcend our linear view of time and space and the limited perspective of our five familiar senses. It gives us a context in which to understand our existence, and an opportunity to experience direct contact with our own timeless nature; to know that we are more than just the goods we consume, or the button we push in our everyday lives."

Every culture has its myths about what successful people look like. In medieval times they wore swords and armor, in more magically oriented times they wore amulets and acted mysteriously. In modern California, successful people often have an image of being tolerant, relaxed, casual people who are so competent they don't have to put on any outward display of competence or sophistication. The man beside you in old blue jeans and casual shirt may be the owner of a multi-million dollar electronics company. Relaxed but competent performance is what counts, not looks.

The insights Targ and Harary give us about successful remote viewing fits this image. They go to pains not to get the viewer "up tight" over successful performance, and do things in a low key way. Several chapters are devoted to developing the reader's psychic abilities. They begin with sensory and psychological awareness exercises, designed to sharpen your powers of observation generally. They invite you to notice the normally unnoticed, like "How does the inside of your mouth taste at this moment? How do the pages of this book smell when you hold them to your nose and inhale?" They work up to having friends set up more formal remote viewing experiments for you, not to test your psychic ability, but to further train it, to train you to distinguish psychic signal from imaginative noise. There are rich examples of all stages of the process, and plenty of common sense throughout the book.

An important secret of successful psychic functioning that is discussed at great length is something Targ and Puthoff have called "analytical overlay" in other publications. They warn the reader about the dangers of premature analysis, putting a verbal label on an impression too soon. When you do this, all your memory images gathered in a lifetime and associated with that memory become activated, so memory associations to the label then override further psychic impressions.

I believe the instructions on developing psychic abilities, coupled with the demystification of the process, will be the most valuable aspects of the book for most

readers. There are many other valuable sections, though, that I will briefly mention. These include Harary's discussion of methods of psychic fraud, the discussions of precognition, and examples of practical application of psychic abilities in everyday life (like finding a parking place!).

Although only briefly mentioned in this book, Targ and Harary also describe a procedure called "associative remote viewing."* This is a way of using precognitive remote viewing to get very specific answers to practical questions. Trying to get simple verbal answers to questions (Yes or No) or numerical answers (5? 19?) by psychic means has not worked well in their or other parapsychologists' experience. It has worked with statistical significance, but not well enough for practical use. It's as if the lifetime of memory associations to numbers and words like yes or no are so overwhelming that psychic functioning is drowned out by analytical overlay. When you are asked to describe a target site or object, though, the possibilities are so overwhelming that your mind gives up any attempt to be analytic, and this lets the psychic signal through.

Targ and Harary have applied associative remote viewing to predicting the outcome of silver commodity futures, asking whether silver would rise or fall, and whether the size of the rise or fall would be large enough to justify investing after broker's commissions were subtracted. A series of nine successful calls led to a substantial profit before some displacement problems set in, so we may be closer to practical application of ESP than we usually think.

There is also a valuable epilogue on psychic research in the Soviet Union by Larissa Vilenskaya, a former Soviet parapsychologist now living in the United States. She verifies from personal experience that there is a considerable amount of parapsychological research going on in the Soviet Union, but the thrust of it is to develop "**extended means for mental influence at a distance.**"

* See the interview with Keith Harary in this issue of Psi Research. - Ed.

For the research minded, the book has an up-to-date bibliography of published experiments on remote viewing that was compiled by George Hansen, Marilyn Schlitz, and myself.

Overall, this is one of the best books on parapsychology in a long time.

Charles T. Tart

Department of Psychology
University of California
Davis, California 95616

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WONDERS, MYSTERIES AND PSI IN CHINA

DONG, Paul, The Four Major Mysteries of Mainland China. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984; 213 pp.

Before the first issue of Psi Research was published, Dr. Hal Puthoff, returning from a trip to the PRC, offered us several intriguing articles on psi in China. Looking at the diagrams and scanning pages filled with unfamiliar Chinese characters, I became very excited: I wanted to have these articles translated and published in Psi Research. After months of arduous efforts on the part of the translators and myself (including my attempt to go through an intensive Chinese course, using the Lozanov method of accelerated learning), some of these articles appeared in English in Psi Research. One can imagine how thrilled I was when almost three years later I received the book, The Four Major Mysteries of Mainland China, which has just been released in this country. The very first paragraphs of the book made it impossible for me to put the book aside until I finished it:

"If you were now standing in the People's Republic of China - say, in Peking,* Shanghai, or Canton - you would see

* The spelling of Chinese names and places (e.g., Peking) is given as written in the original, which differs from that commonly used at present (e.g., Beijing). - Ed.