

Subtle Energies and Uncharted Realms of the Mind

An Esalen Invitational Conference

July 2 - 7, 2000

The Scientific and Spiritual Implications of Psychic Abilities

Summary of a presentation by **Russell Targ**

The world's premier researcher in remote viewing experiments, Russell Targ initiated a 23 year program at Stanford Research Institute with a grant from the federal government to conduct psi research. During his presentation, Targ noted humorously that the extended duration of this federal grant was even more improbable than the very nature of the research he conducted! Interweaving his combined knowledge of modern science and ancient spirituality, Targ summarized some of the spiritual implications of his life long commitment to psi research by making five predictions about the future of the field:

Prediction number one

Nonlocality: Society will soon recognize that we live in a non-local world. Henry Stapp, professor of physics at UC Berkeley, has said that non-locality may be the most important discovery in all of science, because it means we are inseparably connected to one another. Put briefly, the term non-locality refers to the experimentally confirmed observation that two paired photons when traveling away from each other at the speed of light will instantaneous react to one another. When one photon is spun to the left, for example, then its corresponding photon will instantly do the opposite. Targ mentioned a number of experiments that have confirmed this over the past 30 years, including an experiment by Friedmann and Klauser at UC Berkeley in 1969. More recently, non-locality has been substantiated experimentally in Switzerland in 1995 by the scientist Nicholas Gisin, who measured changes in two photons and found them correlated, even when they were as far apart as the cities of Zurich and Basel.

Since Einstein demonstrated in his theory of special relativity of 1905 that nothing can travel faster than the speed of light, then the photons must be connected in a way that transcends our normal local experience of space-time. Targ emphasized that the next step for the scientific community is to realize that events outside their laboratories influence their experiments.

Turning to his studies in the ancient wisdom of the world's religions, Targ continued by describing one of the central tenets of Hinduism, called Brahman = Atman. According to this spiritual tradition, Atman is the experience of individual consciousness and Brahman is the totality of consciousness. Taken together, Atman = Brahman is the realized and experiential insight that all of creation is one within an interconnected universe (and within us).

Targ made reference to the Hindu yoga master, Patanjali, who wrote a book about the single-pointed focus of attention achieved samadhi. According to Patanjali's writings, when you fully quiet your mind, you can see the past, present, and future all at once. In this sense, the ancient Hindu spiritual masters were aware of non-locality, except it was a direct religious experience and not a scientific experiment.

Concluding his first prediction, Targ recommended a book by Melan Kafatos, *The Conscious Universe*, which describes the implications of non-locality for science and society.

Prediction number two

Expanded Awareness: Within the next decade, we will have a much greater acceptance of mind to mind and mind to matter connections. Since 1972, Targ has been conducting experiments in remote viewing, which have revealed that distance does not affect a psychic's ability to see things. One of the most notable subjects Targ studied was Pat Price, who was able to accurately describe the insides of buildings in Soviet Siberia from Targ's laboratory in the San Francisco Bay Area. Targ mentioned other studies as well, all of which indicate that the human mind is capable of "seeing" or "connecting with" things at great distances. Targ believes that such evidence will only continue to accumulate in the coming years.

Prediction number three

Distant healing will be accepted as an effective medical practice. Targ noted that in recent years distant healing has pulled ahead of psychic abilities in terms of publishing success. Mainstream journals now are publishing research findings on distant healing, such as John Aston's review article for *The Annals of Internal Medicine*, which summarized a great number of successful studies on distant healing. A few weeks before this conference, *The NY Times* ran an article mentioning Aston's review. According to Targ, this is only the beginning of a larger trend towards public acceptance of distant healing.

Prediction number four

Science and Spirituality: Within the next decade, there will be a rapprochement between science and spirituality. Targ joked that these days each month a new physicist discovers God and publishes a book about it. Increasingly, scientists are opening to the spiritual dimension in their personal lives and scientific work. Targ believes that soon the spiritual realms will be explored by the scientific method itself. Drawing on the work of Ken Wilber, Targ mentioned that valid knowledge acquisition can occur in three separate ways: through the world of our senses (standard science); through the world of our minds (mathematics and logic); and through the world of spirit (spiritual experience). Each of these three will be open to empirical investigation in the future. Overall, science will continue to perform its task of verification of sound knowledge, but the difference will be that the spiritual realms will be included, rather than excluded, in the domain of inquiry.

Predication number five

Peaceful Minds: In the next decade it will be increasingly recognized that our physical and mental health require that we take some personal control over our chattering minds. The quiet mind has the opportunity to experience what Jesus called "The peace that passes understanding." This experience of overwhelming love and oceanic connection is available to us all, and our ability to share it, gives meaning to our lives. However, with technology, television, and the Internet as it is, we run the risk of never having another quiet moment. This represents the greatest loss we could possibly experience.

Response

In response to Targ's presentation, George Leonard noted that Targ's forecast of increasing acceptance of an inter-connected universe is resting largely on the results of the non-locality experiments and that Targ should be careful to not derive too much from those results. Ralph Abraham added that with

respect to the increasing evidence for mind to mind and mind to matter connections, Targ can also draw on the behavior of the monarch butterflies, who show signs of extra-sensory communication. Dean Radin mentioned that Targ might want to add the acceptance of retro-causality to his list of predictions, because more evidence is accumulating for that as well.

Targ concluded by noting that non-locality can be thought of in two ways. The first is non-locality in spatial terms (e.g., distant healing by someone many miles away). The second is non-locality in temporal terms (e.g., someone's ability to influence events in the past to create a healing result in the present). While most people tend to think of non-locality strictly with respect to space, Targ believes the next step in science may be to focus on the temporal dimension of non-locality. In this way, perhaps healers of the future will help a client by influencing that client's past experiences that led to the illness in the first place.