

Psi at SRI:

Research Exploring the Ecology of Consciousness

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INTRODUCTION

A half century ago, my understanding of reality and identity were profoundly transformed by a series of psi (or psychic) experiments that extended over nearly three years and that took place at the think-tank SRI International located in Menlo Park, California. From 1972 to 1975, I had a unique opportunity to explore the nature of reality in a wide range of experiments at SRI. Surprisingly, I am not aware of any other individual who has had a similar opportunity for sustained exploration of the ecology of consciousness with an array of highly sensitive apparatus with precise feedback in real time.

Although my primary work was as a senior social scientist in the futures group, my part-time work at SRI was doing the psi work. For nearly 3 years, I was paid as a consultant to NASA to explore a wide range of experiments, mostly in the engineering laboratory, generally 3 days a week for 2 or 3 hour stretches depending on the experiments at the time, and all with feedback (e.g., a laser-pendulum-clock; a magnetometer; a balance pan in locked room; influencing plant growth; precognition and clairvoyance with a random number generator; remote viewing of places; remote viewing of technologies; etc.). A few of the remote viewing experiments were published by NASA and SRI. I have a complete version of the SRI report although the version originally published online is either missing or highly redacted. My psycho-energetic interactions (or PK) were not published as they were “off the books.” Importantly, I have retained a number of the strip-charts generated in these sessions. I dropped out of all experiments in 1975 when they were taken over by the CIA and declared secret. According to Freedom of Information Act disclosures, the experiments continued in secret for another 20 years.

Below I share two examples of our intuitive capacities (receptive and expressive), *not because they demonstrate an unusual capacity on my part as I believe that everyone has these intuitive capacities* but because, despite their flaws and limitations, they reveal the nature of how we participate in an ecology or field of consciousness.

RECEPTIVE PSI

There are two primary ways of engaging the universe with our consciousness—*receiving* (the yin or feminine aspect) and *sending* (the yang or the masculine aspect). To illustrate the receiving aspect of our intuitive capacities, I'll describe below one of the "remote viewing" experiments conducted in 1974 as part of a study of psi phenomena for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. (Russell Targ, Phyllis Cole, and Harold Puthoff, *Development of Techniques to Enhance Man/Machine Communication*, Stanford Research Institute, Menlo Park, California, prepared for NASA, contract 953653 Under NAS7-100, June, 1974. Also see, "A Perceptual Channel for Information Transfer Over Kilometer Distances" by Puthoff and Targ published by IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) and accessible online at: <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/1454382?arnumber=1454382>), Also see their book, *Mind-Reach: Scientists Look at Psychic Ability*, Delacorte Press/Eleanor Friede, 1977. Targ, Cole, and Puthoff, Ibid, pp. 55-57.)

To describe protocols briefly, in conducting a remote viewing experiment, I was locked in a bare room with a pad of paper and a tape recorder. After half an hour, I was instructed to intuitively "look" for someone that I knew and then describe where they were (On the Bay? On a freeway? In a wetlands? In redwoods? In the room next door?). The following quote (and accompanying pictures) is taken from the report for NASA and describes one of the experiments. It illustrates how intuitive knowing can be a mixture of both accuracy and ambiguity:

The experimenters (Russell Targ and Phyllis Cole) went to the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station across the bay from SRI, again chosen at random from a prepared list. Duane's description closely matched the target: "...a simple, heavy, solid building with a unique function" in "...relatively natural surroundings" (all correct—see Figures A and B). In his further description, Duane said (correctly) "They are standing at a metal railing looking out over a scene. They are up high enough that they can see some buildings down below." (See Figure C) He sensed some ambiguity of whether the experimenters were inside a building or not. "I have the sense they're outside, though, but they're near a building. There's a larger building-like structure. Feels like it has one function. One primary function. And although they're outside, they're relating to the building and its function." In fact the experimenters were on the open station platform waiting for a train. About 11:22 he said, "I have the impression that Russell is feeling a smooth metal surface. Sort of large plates, large metal plates. Somewhat rectangular." The timing and description are highly accurate. Figure D illustrates Mr. Targ looking at the large metal BART route map, just before the train's arrival. At exactly 11:25 Duane said "everything changed" and "I don't see them

anymore.” That is the precise time the target pair boarded the BART train and left the station.

This experiment in receptive intuition illustrates how we can obtain impressions that are sketchy but nonetheless have a measure of accuracy and connection with the everyday world. While we can trust these intuitions, I learned it is important to be cautious of intellectual interpretations of what they mean.

Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station at Union City, California

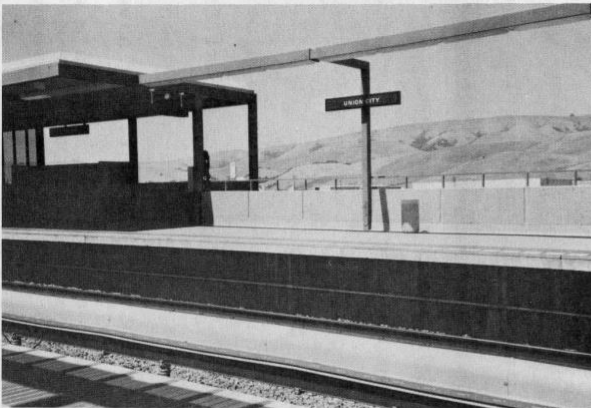
(used as a remote viewing target)



(a) SEEN FROM PARKING LOT



(b) CENTRAL PORTION OF BUILDING



(c) TRAIN PLATFORM ON UPPER LEVEL



(d) MR. TARG AT BART SYSTEM MAP

SA-2613-18

EXPRESSIVE PSI

While participating in formal experiments exploring the receptive side of consciousness, I had informal (“off the books”) opportunities to explore the expressive or

sending side of consciousness. These experiments were not rigorously controlled, and I would often be left alone for an hour or more with the experimental apparatus as I explored the nature of conscious connection with it. I approached these experiments with a deep curiosity as I wanted to learn about the expressive or sending side of our intuitive connection with the cosmos — often defined as “psychokinesis.” Experiments ranged from pushing on a sensitive balance pan in a locked room to engaging with a magnetometer with a sensitive probe immersed in a container of liquid helium.

In another series of psychokinesis experiments, the task was to turn the torsion pendulum of an “anniversary clock” that had four metal balls for weights (similar to that shown below but with the clock mechanism removed). The rotating pendulum was sitting at rest in a highly stable location and covered by two, heavy glass domes to prevent any physical intrusions. The slightest motion of the pendulum was registered by a laser beam and recorded on a strip-chart recorder.

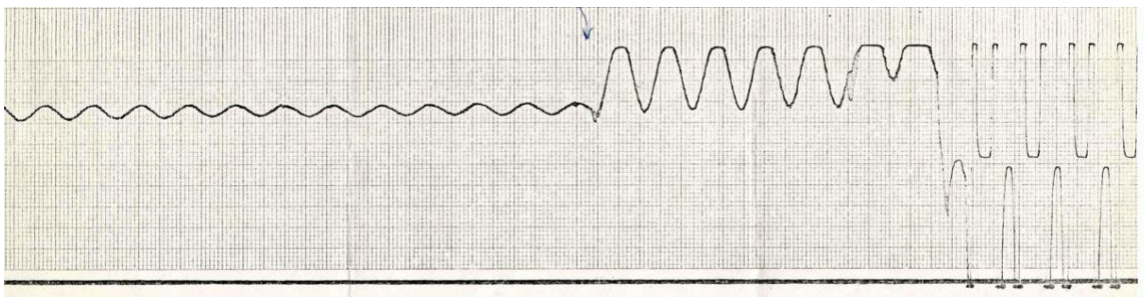


I began this experiment with the assumption of separation: I was on one side of the room and the instrument and the recording apparatus were on the other side. Somehow, I thought I was supposed to project mental energy from myself to the pendulum, sitting at rest, and make it move. After a half-year of effort and repeated failures with this “mind over matter” approach, I began to experiment with a different approach that did not involve any separation or need for the projection of energy. Instead, I began to explore what many sages have been saying for several thousand years; *the entire universe is a unified system that is co-arising in its totality at every moment*. This approach assumes there is no separation and there

is a regenerative process at work whereby the entire universe is continuously arising as a unified whole. To shift my approach from separation to co-arising connection, I began experiments with upwards of an hour of meditation and this awakened the experience of “co-arising” or “dancing” with the experimental apparatus. Although subtle, with concentration the pendulum became a felt presence within my direct experience. The pendulum’s existence and my own became intertwined in direct awareness and felt experience. With the experience of felt unity in a dynamically arising universe, significant exchanges began to occur that were far outside the noise level and random variations of the system.

Shown below is the output from a strip chart recorder that graphically illustrates a powerful interaction: After meditating with the pendulum apparatus for nearly an hour, I came into deep rapport with the system and the output from the strip chart recorder shows the pendulum becoming ever more coherent and quieter. In this particular experiment, I had to leave to go to a meeting in the futures group so, within the space of a few seconds, I coalesced the rotating field of energy that had been building around the pendulum during the past hour. The results were immediate. To my amazement, the previously unmoving pendulum apparatus began to turn, twisting slowly in a flat plane, moving a half-inch in one direction and then back until, after thirty seconds or so, it was turning an inch or so in either direction. Then, abruptly, the four weights or balls suspended on a single wire began vibrating or shaking so violently that they were banging against the support posts. This continued for roughly 30 seconds before stopping suddenly and instantly coming to a complete rest. I was stunned by this level of response and by the unusual sequence of rotating movement, extreme shaking, and suddenly coming to complete rest with no motion whatsoever.

Strip Chart of PK Experiment



Because this was an informal experiment, no other researchers were present to witness what occurred. However, within a couple of minutes, the two primary researchers working on this project (Puthoff and Targ) returned from lunch and entered the room. I told them “You won’t believe what just happened” and offered a brief description. They looked at the pendulum sitting completely at rest under the double glass domes and replied, “You are

right. We don't believe you – that's impossible." While expressing deep skepticism of my description of events, to everyone's astonishment, as we stood looking at the apparatus at complete rest, it unexpectedly began to move as I described: first beginning to rotate back and forth for 30 seconds or so, then shaking vigorously for another 30 seconds, and then abruptly stopping at complete at rest. Over the next twenty minutes, with the two researchers present, the fully covered clock apparatus went through this cycle of rotating, shaking, and completely stopping two more times before the energy in the system was apparently dissipated.

For me, this was a visible and a visceral confirmation that we can participate meaningfully in the ecology of consciousness. It was also a lesson in the ethics of psi. I experienced how our conscious intentions can reach deep into the workings of the cosmos and powerfully connect with the world.

SUMMARY INSIGHTS

Below are the summary insights that I learned from these diverse experiments in what might be called "cosmic feedback training" (several of these are taken from my book, *The Living Universe*; see pages 47 - 52).

First, we all have an intuitive faculty and literal connection with the universe. An empathic connection with the cosmos is not restricted to a gifted few, it is an ordinary part of the functioning of the universe and is accessible to everyone.

Second, participating in these experiments demonstrated to me that our being does not stop at the edge of our skin but extends into and is inseparable from the universe. We are all connected with the deep ecology of the universe and each of us has the ability to extend our consciousness far beyond the range of our physical senses. I am reminded of the wisdom of George Washington Carver, a great educator and botanical researcher, who said that "If you love it enough, anything will talk with you.

Third, our intuitive connection with the cosmos is easy to overlook. Before I became involved in these experiments, I didn't pay much attention to the small, intuitive twinges and feelings that would arise and then pass away. They seemed so subtle that I assumed they were simply part of my bodily experience. Only gradually did I come to appreciate the extent to which I was experiencing my participation in a larger field of aliveness.

Fourth, consciousness can function like a diffuse light bulb or like a laser. Imagine each of these with 100 watts of power: The 100-watt light bulb can sit next to a steel plate for years and will simply warm the metal plate. The 100-watt laser can sit next to a steel plate for a few minutes and can burn a hole through it. The difference is not the power but the focus. In a similar way, I learned the power of *focused* and *unwavering* conscious intention in the laboratory experiments over these three years. An analogy for consciousness is to imagine that you have the task of carrying water for several miles to someone dying of thirst in your

tightly cupped hands. Then, if there is a single moment of distraction, it is akin to your fingers spreading apart and allowing the water (consciousness) to drain out and diminish. Only with precisely focused intention and unwavering attention can the latent power of consciousness become manifest. Yet, I think nearly everyone has the ability to develop this capacity.

Fifth, I learned that psi functioning is not about achieving dominance over something (mind over matter) but rather learning to participate with something in a dance of mutual exchange and transformation. This is a two-way process in which both parties are changed by the interaction. Every action produces a reaction, and this understanding applies to the functioning of the ecology of consciousness. If we try to use our intuitive capacities to achieve a strategic advantage of mind over matter, we are immediately separating ourselves from the dance of participation with the unified, regenerative universe. Instead of fostering connection, attempted domination produces a felt experience and intuition of existential distance and isolation. *Simply stated, domination does not work – dancing does.* This is such a foundational insight that I will describe it at greater length. I discovered that attempting to "push" on reality to achieve psychokinetic results caused an immediate and felt response: reality would "tighten up," solidify, and become resistant to interaction. This wasn't a philosophical concept, but a directly felt experience in accord with one of the fundamental laws of physics—namely that for every action there's an equal and opposite reaction. When I would push, the universe would push back, and instead of connection, I would experience a feeling of literal, existential separation. Countless times, I saw how pushing was counterproductive and did not create the connection I was seeking. Over roughly a six-month period from 1973 to 1974, I gradually learned to reach with intuitive awareness beneath the apparent solidity of form to engage with its flow of continuous co-arising and emergence. Rather than pushing against the "solid and frozen" surface of things, I discovered how to relax into co-participation with reality's ongoing emergence. This shift from domination to dancing—from forcing to flowing—opened the doorway to genuine psychokinetic effects. The magnetometer, clock apparatus, and other instruments provided objective feedback that validated this radically different mode of engagement. What emerged was a precise understanding of how focused and non-forceful intention operates. This wasn't "mind over matter" but rather conscious knowing participating within matter's own arising. The distinction proved crucial—any attempt at dominance triggered instant solidification and resistance, while co-participatory presence allowed for genuine movement and interaction. Learning the importance of "co-arising" revealed a universal thread running through all reality—a continuous becoming that sustains every seemingly solid material form. This wasn't abstract philosophy but lived experience. I learned to ride this thread of becoming as my primary guide into, with, and through participation with reality. By relaxing completely into the co-arising process, surrendering all pushing and grasping, I could ride the flow of reality becoming itself. The precision required was absolute—a complete matching of awareness

with reality's movement. There was no other pathway to connection — only riding the exact edge of reality's continuous creation with unwavering attention. Even a moment of distraction or discursive thought would require me to start over. Only the thread of becoming remained as my trusted guide to connect with reality. The universe revealed itself as fundamentally alive and responsive, but only to those who would meet it in its own mode of being—as continuous creation rather than frozen form. The thread of co-arising runs through everything, and learning to feel and follow this thread, to maintain the knife-edge precision of connection with reality's own becoming, opens doorways that remain forever closed to the pushing, grasping approach of conventional interaction. This wasn't mysticism but engineering—discovered through rigorous experimentation over approximately two years. validated through instrumental feedback and confirmed through direct experience. This experience points toward a new paradigm where the universe is understood not as dead mechanism but as living process, and where human evolution requires us to learn to dance with reality rather than dominate existence.

Sixth, at the same time these experiments were showing me that consciousness is a field property of the universe, they also made me much more skeptical about the need for channeling, crystals, pendulums, pyramids, and other intermediaries to access our intuition. Validating an ecology of consciousness as a basic property of the universe does not automatically validate all claims of paranormal phenomena. It is important to bring a critical and discerning science to this inquiry. We are just beginning to use the tools of science to cut away the superstition and find what is real and what is not. It is a “miracle” that anything exists at all. However, once the miracle of our unified and regenerative universe is consciously recognized, we find lawful dynamics at work throughout.

Seventh, scientific evidence of the existence of psychic functioning has been mounting for decades and is now so overwhelming that the burden of proof has shifted to those who would seek to dismiss its existence. It is time to move beyond the narrow, body-brain-based and separative view of consciousness because it no longer explains important scientific evidence and it severely limits our thinking about the scope and depth of our connection with the universe.

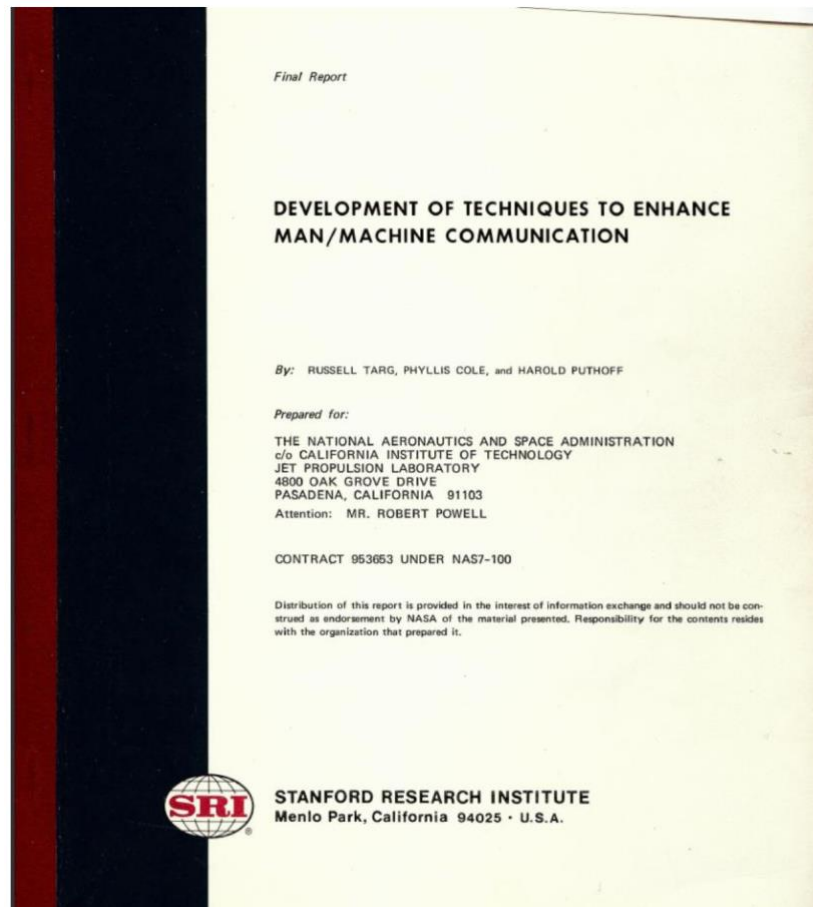
Eighth, as interesting as psychic or intuitive functioning may be, the much more important insight is what it says about the nature of the universe — that it is connected with itself through the tissue of consciousness in non-local ways that transcend relativistic differences, and the totality arises as a regenerative and dynamic flow at every moment. As a unified whole in flowing movement, we can dance with the cosmos consciously and this produces phenomena that we may describe as “psychokinesis.”

i Russell Targ, Phyllis Cole, and Harold Puthoff, *Development of Techniques to Enhance Man/Machine Communication*, Stanford Research Institute, Menlo Park, California, prepared for NASA, contract 953653 Under NAS7-100, June 1974. Note: If you look up this report's NASA contract number, (contract 953653 Under NAS7-100, June 1974)

Importantly, Section IV— "Remote Viewing of Natural Targets," in which I participated—is missing from the version the CIA published three months later (August 1974) after declaring the work 'secret' (a common CIA practice is to deliberately smear and distort documents to make them virtually unreadable, so they are in the public domain but essentially useless for researchers and functionally 'secret'). My copy of this report (pictures below) may be the only publicly available version of the report

printed before the CIA took over the project (at which point I withdrew). In addition, the experiments in psychokinesis in which I was the sole subject were never made public, but I did make xerox copies of some of the strip charts, one of which is shown above. (Also see, R. Targ and H. Puthoff, *Mind-Reach: Scientists Look at Psychic Ability*, Delacorte Press/Eleanor Friede, 1977.

ii Targ, Cole, and Puthoff, *Ibid*, pp. 55-57.⁹¹⁰¹¹¹²



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