

Part II

JOHN S. BELL SESSION: STATE VECTOR REDUCTION

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN S. BELL

Among the people whom I have met personally there was no one whom I revered more than John Bell. He was a scientist of great intellectual power, as I know first hand by studying his papers on the foundations of quantum mechanics and hearing his lectures on the subject. From others whose judgment I trust comes the testimony that his work on quantum field theory and elementary particle theory was also deep and original. Furthermore, although he was not a professional philosopher, he was deeply concerned with philosophical questions concerning the nature of the physical world and the character of human knowledge. He was aware of the philosophical implications of his own scientific work, and his explicit philosophical comments were penetrating, pungent, judicious, and wonderfully sensible. What was most remarkable about John Bell was the fact that his character was as great as his intellect. He was simple, direct, free from self-aggrandizement, intensely dedicated to finding the truth, and completely honest. He was on occasion a sharp critic, as the other speakers have testified, but his sharpness never arose from a lapse in generosity or from a desire to gain the upper hand, but rather from his impatience with arguments that in his opinion obscured the truth. Bell's Theorem, for which he is most famous, was more a triumph of character than of intellect. It was not difficult to prove mathematically. The difficult thing about it was the realization of what was understood and what was not understood in the discussions of hidden variables. Bell's honesty about his own understanding provided the impetus for his formulation and proof of the theorem. It is very sad to realize that we shall have no further revelations and instruction from him.

Abner Shimony