

THE TEACH YOURSELF BOOKS

# PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

by

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## P R E F A C E

WE are slowly emerging from a century of scientific thought based, in the broadest sense, on a materialistic outlook. This slow emergence is partly due to causes within the edifice of science itself, and, as we should expect, it is most apparent in the basic domain of physics. Signs are not wanting that the biological sciences are becoming sensitive to the new life, and the rise of psychological medicine is an interesting pointer to a broader outlook in the applied field. One of the most interesting growths of the last twenty-five years has been the science of para-psychology, which may briefly be described as the application of experimental method and statistics to the field of psychical research. However suspicious the majority of scientific men may still be of psychical research in general, here in para-psychology are *facts* which completely undermine the complacent materialism of the past century. Except to those who prefer not to see them lest they should have to recast their thinking, these facts present an inescapable challenge. I venture to think that the next century will be notable to posterity for two things—(1) that nuclear energy compelled men to find an alternative to war, and (2) that a widening recognition of the importance of psychical research changed the whole climate of thought.

I have not written this book for scholars and experts, but for the ordinary thoughtful person who has not a great deal of time for reading but would like to understand what psychical research is all about and why I regard its implications and its future as of such importance.

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## CHAPTER I

# HISTORY OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

FROM ancient times there have persisted records of, and beliefs in, what today we call para-normal phenomena. Such things as thought-reading, "second-sight", prophecies and premonitions, ghosts and haunted houses, have often found a place in literature, but where entertainment value is the criterion, the scientific mind is not disposed towards enquiry. There has, however, always been a persistent, if fragmentary record of strange experiences which, if accepted as facts, do not seem to come under the well-ordered laws of modern science. Such records have appeared frequently in connection with spiritualism and the phenomena of trance, and these observations have been made in some instances by most competent and trustworthy observers. Over seventy years ago Professor Sidgwick said :

"It is a scandal that the dispute as to the reality of these phenomena should still be going on, that so many competent witnesses should have declared their belief in them, that so many others should be profoundly interested in having the question determined, and yet that the educated, as a body, should still be simply in the attitude of incredulity."

In 1882 the first meeting was held in London of the Society for Psychical Research. It was founded by a group of Cambridge scholars who were prepared to investigate these phenomena in a strictly scientific spirit, and were concerned to collect, in the first instance, reliable and trustworthy data. The Society was extremely fortunate in the intellectual

calibre and devotion of its founders, who gave many years of their life to personal and painstaking investigation, and created for their successors a tradition of sound and critical scholarship. Indeed, the seventy years of enquiry which have been recorded in the *Proceedings* and the *Journal* of the S.P.R. now make it possible for the unprejudiced student to form reliable opinions on many of these phenomena. A book such as this could not have been written were it not for the devoted labours of these men and their successors. The moving spirit was Henry Sidgwick, who became Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy in Cambridge. His pupil and friend, F. W. H. Myers, a brilliant classical scholar and minor poet—a man with a passion for truth—also played a leading part. Edmund Gurney, a Fellow of Trinity with a particular aptitude for psychological experiment and with medical qualifications, joined them later. In addition, Sir William Barrett of Dublin, Lord Rayleigh, Mrs. Henry Sidgwick and others of scientific standing gave their time and energy to the Society. During its history the Presidential Chair has been occupied by men such as Professor Balfour Stewart, Earl Balfour, Professor William James, Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor Charles Richet, Bishop Boyd Carpenter, Professor Henri Bergson, Dr. F. C. S. Schiller, Professor Gilbert Murray, Dr. L. P. Jacks, Lord Rayleigh, Professor William McDougall, Professor Hans Driesch, Dr. W. F. Prince, and others. These names alone are an indication of the respect in which the Society's work has been held by eminent men. They are a reminder also to the person who, without ascertaining the facts, supposes that psychical research is concerned merely with "spooks" and "ghosts" and the paraphernalia of popular spiritualism and superstition, that far more important issues are at stake. What these are will be discussed later in the light of reliable data.

## EARLY WORK

When the Society first began its investigations, six small committees were formed, each being entrusted with the study of a special topic. They were as follows :

1. An examination of the nature and extent of any influence which may be exerted by one mind upon another, apart from any generally recognised mode of perception.

2. The study of hypnotism and the forms of so-called mesmeric trance, with its alleged insensibility to pain; clairvoyance and other allied phenomena.

3. A critical revision of Reichenbach's researches with certain persons called "sensitive", and an enquiry whether such persons possess any power of perception beyond a highly exalted sensibility of the recognised sensory organs.

4. A careful investigation of any reports resting on strong testimony regarding apparitions at the moment of death, or otherwise, or regarding disturbances in houses reputed to be haunted.

5. An enquiry into the various physical phenomena commonly called spiritualistic; with an attempt to discover their causes and general laws.

6. The collection and collation of existing materials bearing on the history of these subjects.

I shall not interrupt this brief historical survey to indicate how far the seventy years of subsequent work have illuminated these matters. They are mentioned in order to show the type of phenomena which at that time were considered to call for investigation. The measure of success achieved will, it is hoped, be made clear in later chapters of this book.

Some of the landmarks in the history of the Society can

be mentioned briefly. Messrs. Gurney, Myers, and Podmore published in 1886 a large collection of data in a book called *Phantasms of the Living*. It was a pioneering work, valuable even today as a source-book, as well as for the theoretical views developed.

Another landmark was the Census of Hallucinations in 1889-90 to discover how widespread were experiences of this para-normal type. The main question asked was: "Have you ever, when believing yourself to be completely awake, had a vivid impression of seeing or being touched by a living or inanimate object, or of hearing a voice; which impression, so far as you can discover was not due to any external physical cause?" Of the 17,000 replies, approximately 10 per cent. answered "yes". It was particularly interesting to find that of these, about 32 per cent. were hallucinations of living persons, 14.3 per cent. of dead persons, and 33.2 per cent. of unidentified persons. Thus, contrary to popular belief, apparitions of the living are more common than apparitions of the dead.

With the deaths of Henry Sidgwick in 1900 and of F. W. H. Myers in 1901, followed by the posthumous publication in two large volumes of Myers' great work, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, we come to the end of the first phase of the Society's work. Reliable data had been collected in many fields. Myers had put forward important theoretical views, including his concept of a subliminal mind. Perhaps most important of all, the technique of investigation had been discovered by experience; high standards had been set and maintained. Sources of mal-observation and the types of precaution necessary to give data of scientific value were laid down. In no field of enquiry are these things more important than in psychical research. Here we are often dealing with phenomena which seem to the orthodox scientific mind to have an inherent aura of

improbability about them. However prejudiced such an attitude may be, it has to be reckoned with, and it can, I think, justly be said of the Society for Psychical Research that the standard of its investigations and the records in its *Proceedings* will bear favourable comparison with that of the best learned societies in any field of enquiry.

In 1888, six years after the parent body was instituted, the American Society for Psychical Research was founded, and through its *Proceedings* and *Journal* it has also added greatly to the body of our knowledge.

### THE PRESENT CENTURY

I shall not attempt to summarise the growth of knowledge of the last half century. This little book will itself be a presentation of such knowledge to the reader. About twenty-five years ago there was, in the founding of the Parapsychology Department at Duke University, North Carolina, an event of great importance. The importance lay not only in the academic recognition given to work in psychical research, but also in the systematic development of research of an *experimental* kind, of such a nature that statistics could be used to evaluate it.

One of the most important methods of enquiry in psychical research is to collect a large stock of well-attested records. These are naturally of spontaneous and uncontrolled happenings. They often have about them an impressive and dramatic character, and appear to be associated with some crisis or emotional experience in which a person is involved. The collections of large numbers of such cases can be examined, analysed, and compared, and gradually there emerge common elements which permit hypotheses to be formulated. Let me present one such spontaneous event which might be labelled as "clairvoyance" (though to attach a label to a case is not to have an understanding of it).

Case 1.—Mrs. Bettany (from *Phantasms of the Living*, Vol. I, p. 194):

“When I was a child I had many remarkable experiences of a psychical nature, which I remember to have looked upon as ordinary and natural at the time.

“On one occasion (I am unable to fix the date, but I must have been about ten years old) I was walking in a country lane at A, the place where my parents resided. I was reading geometry as I walked along . . . when in a moment I saw a bedroom known as the White Room in my home, and upon the floor lay my mother, to all appearance dead. The vision must have remained some minutes, during which time my real surroundings appeared to pale and die out; but as the vision faded, actual surroundings came back, at first dimly and then clearly. I could not doubt that what I had seen was real, so instead of going home I went at once to the house of our medical man and found him at home. He at once set out with me for my home, on the way putting questions I could not answer, as my mother was to all appearances well when I left home. I led the doctor straight to the White Room, where we found my mother actually lying as in my vision. This was true even to minute details. She had been seized suddenly by an attack of the heart, and would soon have breathed her last but for the doctor’s timely advent. I shall get my father and mother to read and sign this.”

In answer to questions, Mrs. Bettany added :

(1) I was in no anxiety about my mother at the time of the vision.

(2) I found a handkerchief with a lace border beside her on the floor. This I had distinctly noticed in my vision.

(3) This was the only occasion, I believe, on which I saw a scene transported apparently into the actual field of



vision, to the exclusion of objects and surroundings actually present. I have had other visions in which I have seen events happening as they really were in another place, but I have also been conscious of real (i.e. immediate) surroundings

Of course spontaneous events, by their very nature, come unsought. They cannot be controlled or repeated at will. In this respect the field of study is like that of astronomy, geology, or meteorology: the data have to be collected and observed as they are or when they occur. In the above case there is clearly some communication between the minds of the mother and child, originating in the former mind and building up in the latter mind into something which has all the vividness of visual perception. The communication itself was of a little group of related ideas born in a desperate situation.

*Experimental* work deals with the communication of simple ideas: numbers, animal figures, colours, or geometrical symbols, where it is agreed that there shall be only a limited range of choice (say, five different symbols). In this restricted type of communication it is possible to assess whether the scoring estimated upon a chance basis is exceeded or not. Moreover, in any appreciable departure from chance scoring it is possible to calculate what are the odds that such a departure from the expected score is likely to be a chance deviation. Expressed simply and briefly, this is the prototype of Professor J. B. Rhine's work at Duke University. It has of course been greatly developed and elaborated, and is now conducted in a variety of forms in many parts of the world.

For this type of work there is much to be said.

1. It is controlled experimental work and substantially repeatable.
2. It permits variation of many relevant factors, and thus

helps to disclose the mode of operation of the para-normal faculty.

3. The application of statistical method makes it possible to say what the odds are against "coincidence" or "chance" as an explanation.

On the other hand, the phenomena being so investigated are those on the fringe of normality: they have none of the emotional associations and dramatic undertones of many spontaneous phenomena. To name a card as a "circle" rather than a "square" is not a very stirring disclosure—and it may well be that careful study of para-normal phenomena in their full flowering in spontaneous cases will reveal much that cannot be found in experimental work.

I think we can sum up by saying that both modes of study have made, and will continue to make, an important contribution to psychical research. There is a third method of study, but this is for the future. Rapid progress may be expected when some well-educated, scientifically disposed persons are prepared to undergo the hard discipline of developing their own extra-sensory faculties and bringing them under the control of the will. With these preliminary remarks, we shall plunge into our subject.

#### *Books for Further Reading*

1. *The Society for Psychical Research—an Outline of its History*: W. H. SALTER (31 Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1). Price 2s.

2. *Psychical Research Past and Present*: R. H. THOULESS (S.P.R., 31 Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1). Price 1s.

## CHAPTER II

### TELEPATHY AND CLAIRVOYANCE

THE term telepathy was coined by F. W. H. Myers, and refers to the communication of ideas from one mind to another without the use of any of the recognised channels of sense. The term clairvoyance means literally "clear seeing", and refers to the mind's power of acquiring knowledge of physical objects or events (as distinct from mental ones) without the use of any of the recognised channels of sense. Other closely related terms, such as clair-audience or clair-sentience will be at once understood. The percipient mind describes its para-normal knowledge *as though* it was of the type which would be acquired by normal hearing or feeling.

Other terms have been widely used in recent years, such as "extra-sensory perception" (E.S.P.) and "para-normal cognition" (P.N.C.). These are terms which embrace all of the above phenomena. Some authorities dislike them: the first because we have no right to assume the mechanism is akin to normal perception; the second because it is scarcely cognition if the information is not appreciated to be true knowledge. Dr. Thouless has suggested that the Greek letter  $\psi$  (psi) should be used to designate the faculty, since it carries no such ideas. We shall not worry about the use of terms, however, as long as these objections are realised.

#### SPONTANEOUS CASES OF TELEPATHY

Some of the most interesting and convincing examples of telepathy occur in everyday life. They are of no evidential value to anyone except the immediate experiencer, but where they are of frequent occurrence to a person, they leave

little room for doubt. I present a few cases out of a wealth of data which may be regarded as typical of the more dramatic variety :

*Case 2.*—Commander Aylesbury (from *Phantasms of the Living*, Vol. II, p. 227) :

“The writer, when thirteen years of age, was capsized in a boat when landing on the island of Bally, east of Java, and was nearly drowned. On coming to the surface, after being repeatedly submerged, the boy called his mother. This amused the boat’s crew, who spoke of it afterwards, and jeered him a good deal about it. Months after, on arrival in England, the boy went to his home, and while telling his mother of his narrow escape, he said, ‘While I was under water, I saw you all sitting in this room; you were working something white. I saw you all—Mother, Emily, Eliza, and Ellen.’ His mother at once said, ‘Why yes, and I heard you cry for me, and I sent Emily to look out of the window, for I remarked that something had happened to that poor boy.’ The time, owing to the difference of East longitude, corresponded with the time when the voice was heard.”

Commander Aylesbury adds :

“I saw their features (my mother’s and sisters’), the room and the furniture, particularly the old-fashioned Venetian blinds. My eldest sister was seated next to my mother.

“I think the time must have been very early in the morning. I remember a boat capsized the day before, and washed up. The mate said we would go and bring her off in the morning, but the exact time I cannot remember. It was a terrible position and the surf was awful. We were knocked end over end, and it was the most narrow escape I ever had—and I have had many; but this one was so

impressed on my mind with the circumstances—the remarks and jeers of the men—‘Boy, what was you calling for your mother for? Do you think she could pull you out of Davy Jones’s locker,’ etc., with other language I cannot use.”

One of his sisters wrote :

“I distinctly remember the incident you mention in your letter (the voice calling ‘Mother’); it made such an impression on my mind, I shall never forget it. We were sitting quietly at work one evening; it was about nine o’clock. I think it must have been late in the summer as we had left the street door open. We first heard a faint cry of ‘Mother’; we all looked up, and said to one another, ‘Did you hear that? Someone cried out “Mother”.’ We had scarcely finished speaking, when the voice again called, ‘Mother’, twice in quick succession, the last cry a frightened, agonising cry. We all started up, and Mother said to me, ‘Go to the door and see what is the matter.’ I ran directly into the street and stood for some minutes, but all was silent and not a person to be seen; it was a lovely evening, not a breath of air. Mother was sadly upset about it. I remember she paced the room, and feared that something had happened to you. She wrote down the date the next day, and when you came home and told us how nearly you had been drowned, and the time of day, Father said it would be about the time nine o’clock would be with us. I know the date and the time corresponded.”

*Case 3.*—Mrs. Taunton (from *Phantasms of the Living*, Vol. II, p. 37) :

“On Thursday evening, 14th November, 1867, I was sitting in the Birmingham Town Hall with my husband at a concert, when there came over me the icy chill which

usually accompanies these occurrences. Almost immediately, I saw with perfect distinctness, between myself and the orchestra, my uncle, Mr. W., lying in bed with an appealing look on his face, like one dying. I had not heard anything of him for several months, and had no reason to think he was ill. The appearance was not transparent or filmy, but perfectly solid-looking; and yet I could somehow see the orchestra, not through, but behind it. I did not try turning my eyes to see whether the figure moved with them, but looked at it with a fascinated expression that made my husband ask if I was ill. I asked him not to speak to me for a minute or two; the vision gradually disappeared, and I told my husband, after the concert was over, what I had seen. A letter came shortly after telling of my uncle's death. He died at exactly the time when I saw the vision."

#### *Case 4*

"I well remember my wife telling me of the following incident—one which we have recalled several times since it happened over twenty years ago. Our eldest daughter M. was a little girl between two and three years old at the time. The following is my wife's account of the events.

"I was looking out of the window into the garden where a young married friend was playing with M., and in particular was teaching her to turn somersaults. I felt some concern, as M. seemed very small to be learning these contortions, but I said nothing as I did not want to hurt my friend's feelings.

"That same night when passing through the drowsy state just before going to sleep there suddenly flashed into my mind a picture of M. with her neck broken. I quickly threw it off, of course, and went to sleep.

"In the morning one of the first things which M. said

to me in her childish way was, "My neck isn't broken, is it Mummy?" " "

I shall comment briefly on these cases. Case 2 has ostensibly a reciprocal element about it. The boy apparently saw clairvoyantly his home surroundings while several members of his family clair-audiently heard the voice. It is the latter phenomenon to which I particularly draw attention, for there were several percipients and there was corroborative evidence that the boy called for his mother. In Case 3, the event was conveyed to Mrs. Taunton's mind as a veridical vision or hallucination. It might be described as clairvoyance on Mrs. Taunton's part, or as a telepathic communication from her uncle's mind to her own which rose into consciousness as a group of visual images which she regarded as objective. In Case 4, the piece of visual imagery and its accompanying idea was conveyed to the little girl's mind and given verbal expression. This last case is obviously one of pure telepathy, involving at unconscious levels a mind-to-mind relationship. In the two previous cases, instead of invoking clairvoyance and clair-audience, we could regard the phenomenon as telepathy, but say that an auditory vehicle in the one case and a visual vehicle in the other case were the means of presenting the information to the consciousness of the percipient. Sometimes a piece of knowledge may be conveyed para-normally to another mind—wholly symbolically. I stress these features because, while it is convenient in some respects to retain terms like telepathy, clairvoyance and clair-audience, the truth may be that the mind has one great faculty of apprehension (which we may label  $\psi$  if we so desire). The mind may create, however, a variety of vehicles to transport this apprehension to the level of conscious awareness.

## QUALITATIVE EXPERIMENTAL WORK

A great deal of experimental work of a simple and straightforward kind has been recorded. In principle, there have been two persons, one concerned with the attempt to transmit an idea (the "agent") and the other concerned with its reception (the "percipient"). The ideas which have been transmitted have been of every variety: playing cards, concrete objects, proper names, numbers, simple designs (geometrical and otherwise) drawn on paper, colours, sensations of taste, localised sensations of pain, etc. The first three volumes of *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* contain records which are well worth perusal and present the sceptic with facts of an impressive kind. This type of work does not lend itself, except in special cases, to accurate quantitative assessment. A picture, for example, drawn by a percipient may show points of undoubted resemblance to the picture constructed by the agent, and one may have to describe it as a "partial success". Where human judgment is involved in assessing the results, prejudice in one direction or the other easily arises. How far such terms as "chance" and "coincidence" can be applied then becomes a matter for debate.

I propose to describe in this section only the work of Professor Gilbert Murray, who with his daughters Mrs. Arnold Toynbee, Miss Agnes Murray, and other members of his family, carried out (1910-24) two long series of experiments in pure telepathy. The nature of the ideas, both as regards character and complexity, is such that the measure of success obtained is phenomenal—indeed, it is most impressive. The procedure is described by Professor Murray as follows (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXIX):

"I go out of the room and of course out of earshot. Someone in the room, generally my eldest daughter, thinks



of a scene or an incident or anything she likes, and says it aloud. It is written down, and I am called. I come in, usually take my daughter's hand, and then, if I have luck, describe in detail what she has thought of. The least disturbance of our customary method, change of time or place, presence of strangers, controversy and especially noise, is apt to make things go wrong. I become myself somewhat over-sensitive and irritable, though not, I believe, to a noticeable degree. . . . When I am getting at the thing which I wish to discover, the only effort I make is a sort of attention of a quite general kind. The thing may come through practically any sense channel, or it may discover a road of its own, a chain of reasoning or association which, as far as I remember, never coincides with any similar chain in the mind of anyone present, but is invented much as a hallucination is invented, for the purpose of the moment."

Here are a group of eight experiments made on two successive occasions, which speak for themselves.

1. *Mrs. Arnold Toynbee* (agent): "Lord Jim being tried at Aden in Conrad's book. The scene in the Law Court."

*Professor Murray*: "No, not a glimmer."

2. *Mrs. Arnold Toynbee* (agent): "Mr. Fisher and Mr. B. drinking beer in a café in Berlin."

*Professor Murray*: "It's got something to do with a public-house—no, it's beer. It's Fisher and somebody else drinking beer—somebody who has nothing to do with Fisher. I can't be at all sure—I should think little B."

3. *Mrs. Arnold Toynbee* (agent): "Savonarola having the pictures burnt in Florence and standing up and a crowd around."

*Professor Murray*: "It's Italian—I think it's something in a book. Well, this is the merest guess and may have some-

thing to do with the spark that came out of the fire—I get a smell of burning, the smell of a bonfire—I get Savonarola burning the pictures in Florence.”

4. *Mrs. Arnold Toynbee* (agent): “I think of a scene in a Strindberg play—two people sitting in a round tower and the man has a fainting fit and the wife hopes he is dead.”

*Professor Murray*: “This is a book and a book I haven’t read. No—not Russian—not Italian. It’s somebody lying in a faint. It’s very horrible. I think somebody is fainting and his wife or some woman is hoping he is dead. It can’t be Maeterlinck—I think I have read them all—oh! it’s Strindberg. [‘Can you get the place?’] I thought of them in a great round tower. That was why I thought of Maeterlinck.”

5. *Mrs. Arnold Toynbee* (agent): “I think of that funny old Irishman called Dr. Hunt in the hotel at Jamaica. I’ll think of the race where they wouldn’t let him ride with his little grey mare.”

*Professor Murray*: “Tropics. It must be something to do with Jamaica. I can’t get it a bit clear. I feel as if it were a drunken Irish doctor talking with a brogue. I can’t get it clear.” [Mrs. Toynbee did not mention that he got drunk, but he did.]

6. *Mrs. Arnold Toynbee* (agent): “Mrs. C. hitting the Purser with a skipping rope.”

*Professor Murray*: “I think it’s Mother hitting the Purser with a skipping rope—no, it’s your woman, the over-dressed woman, Mrs. C.”

7. *Mrs. Arnold Toynbee* (agent): “The little crocodile on the Captain’s trunk, and him showing it to Isabel and me.”

*Professor Murray*: “Where’s Denis’s lizard gone? Because I thought it was Denis’s lizard pursuing you and Isabel—the lizard on a bed in a cabin, and you and Isabel looking at it.”

8. *Mrs. Arnold Toynbee* (agent): "I'll do D. S. in a dug-out canoe on the Serpentine."

*Professor Murray*: "Is it somebody walking in Kensington Gardens? D. S. walking in Kensington Gardens. No, I didn't see what else he was doing—perhaps he was in a boat."

To the suggestion that perhaps unconscious muscular responses under Professor Murray's hand furnished clues, I think a sufficient answer lies in the complexity of the ideas and the fact that Professor Murray seldom withdrew or contradicted what he had said. Moreover, any contact seemed unessential, as was shown by many experiments in which there was none. The last three examples given above were in the absence of any contact.

In the first long series of 505 experiments conducted between 1910 and 1915, 33 per cent. were judged successful, 28 per cent. partially successful, and 39 per cent. failures. In the second series of 295 experiments conducted between 1916 and 1924, there were 36 per cent. successes, 23 per cent. partial successes, and 41 per cent. failures.

This group of experiments is one of the most remarkable and convincing which has ever been undertaken and officially recorded.

#### QUANTITATIVE EXPERIMENTAL WORK

About twenty-five years ago Dr. J. B. Rhine of Duke University, U.S.A., began systematic research of a kind to which statistical methods are applicable. The results of this have been made available in the *Journal of Para-psychology* and in several books which he has published. The basic type of experiment can be very quickly described.

A pack of "Zener" cards is used, consisting of 25 cards each with similar backs—of the playing-card variety. Five symbols are selected—say, square, circle, star, cross, wavy

line—and there are five of each kind in the pack. The pack is shuffled, and the “agent” with the pack sits at one end of a table, being obscured by a screen from the view of the “percipient”, who sits at the other end. The agent now looks at the cards one at a time, gives an audible signal as he does so, and the percipient records on paper what he guesses the card to be. The list can be checked subsequently against the pack. The laws of probability indicate that the chance of guessing correctly is 1 in 5. Suppose 100 trials were made, and instead of 20 being correct, there were 30 correct. Elementary statistics applied to these results allows us to say that the likelihood of this deviation from the expected score occurring as a matter of chance is approximately 1 in 150. In other words, it is very probable that some unrecognised factor is influencing the guessing. One of Dr. Rhine’s early collaborators, A. J. Linzmayer, made 4,505 guesses in one experiment with 33·6 per cent. correct. The odds against so big a deviation from 20 per cent. as this are astronomical if chance alone is supposed to be operative.

Such a simple experiment as that described above is said to be under conditions of general extra-sensory perception (G.E.S.P.). In other words, the percipient could have acquired knowledge telepathically from the agent’s mind, or clairvoyantly from the pack itself. The experiment could, however, easily be conducted under conditions of clairvoyance alone. The pack of cards would be shuffled; no person would look at it, and the percipient would guess what he believed the order to be from top to bottom of the pack. One of Rhine’s assistants, C. E. Stuart, made 7,500 guesses under these conditions, scoring 24·2 per cent. correct. Herbert Pearce, another collaborator, made 10,300 guesses with 36·4 per cent. correct. The odds with results of this kind are billions to one in favour of a factor other than chance being operative.

During the years that followed this early work, every reasonable criticism of experimental conditions has been met. A great variety of experiments has been made, and some of the laws governing success have emerged. Here are facts which cannot be gainsaid, and the onus of disproof now lies with those who deny them.

I shall refer briefly to experimental work done by G. N. M. Tyrrell, with Miss Gertrude Johnson as percipient. Miss G. J. had a flair for finding lost objects when not consciously looking for them, and Tyrrell devised experiments to use this faculty for investigation. Five small boxes were laid side by side and projected through a screen on a table. On the side of the table where Tyrrell sat, the boxes were open; on the side of the percipient (G. J.) the boxes had sloping, overhanging lids. The boxes were heavily padded inside. Tyrrell placed the end of a wooden pointer into the boxes at random, saying "In" as he did so. G. J. opened the lid of the box where she believed the pointer to be, and Tyrrell could score success or failure by the light coming through. Most careful tests failed to detect any sound made when the pointer was placed in a box. In 30,000 trials there should have been 6,000 successes on a chance basis. In fact, there were 9,364 successes (30.2 per cent.). The odds against this on a chance basis are billions to one. In criticism of this work it was suggested that Tyrrell might have had certain habit patterns in the insertion of the pointer into the various boxes. These might have coincided with certain habit patterns of G. J. in choosing a box. The answer to this is :

1. Six different operators successively worked with G. J., and in 8,500 trials 25 per cent. successes were recorded. It is most unlikely that these various operators would have the same habit pattern as Tyrrell's—assuming that there is such a thing.

2. In a later piece of apparatus the agent's selection of

box was made by a chance method based on a rotating mechanical device. The results of G. J. were unaffected. In a later apparatus, Tyrrell used light-proof boxes completely closed and containing pea-lamps, one of which could be lit by a chance mechanical device. The operator (Tyrrell) using this did not himself know which lamp was being lit. The recording was also made automatically on a moving strip of paper. When a lid was raised by the percipient, an ink-wheel marked the paper. If the selected box contained the lighted lamp, a second wheel also marked the paper. In one experimental series of 7,809 trials, 1,841 (23·5 per cent.) were correct. It was noticed that at intervals there were little runs of six or eight correct guesses—a feature also suggesting that for a short period the para-normal faculty was in action.

The sceptic may perhaps suggest that some minute leakage of light from the boxes was a sensory clue. Apart from the precautions taken, the answer to this was provided by Tyrrell in a relay device which he could put into the circuit by a switch. The selection of the lamp by the agent was made as before by a chance method, but the lamp selected did not light up until the relay came into operation. The relay was operated once any lid had been raised by a slight amount. The reader will perhaps reflect on the implications of this : that G. J.'s hand moved towards a box where a lamp would—a short time later—be lit. Here, in fact, is evidence of clairvoyance, not of a present event but of a future one (unless clairvoyant perception of the intricacies of the electrical wiring is assumed).

Tyrrell remarked that it was one of the most impressive features of the research, that it did not appear to matter whether the delayed-action relay was operating or not. The evidence for a precognitive faculty—of which this is only a fragment—will be dealt with in the next chapter.

FACTORS AFFECTING  $\psi$ -FACULTY

One of the most interesting and significant discoveries associated with experimental work is that the distance between agent and percipient does not appear to affect the faculty. If two persons are able to achieve a certain rate of scoring, the same rate is maintained whether the distance between them is measured in yards or hundreds of miles. Here, then, is something very different from physical types of radiation. The mind of a person is certainly linked with his brain, and permits both of action of the person and the receipt of impressions at the point of space where his body is. The mind of the person must not, however, be assumed as "in" space at all. A part of its activity, and in particular its relation with other minds, is apparently on a level to which our familiar spatial considerations do not apply.

If successive runs through a pack are set out in horizontal rows underneath each other, the successes are more marked in the earlier half of a run than in the latter half. Some kind of fatigue effect appears to operate. In addition, the successes are frequently more marked in early rows than in later ones—as though once the stimulus of novelty and interest has departed, it is less easy to evoke  $\psi$ -faculty. It has also been remarked that a cheerful, informal, friendly atmosphere is much more likely to give rise to success than one of grim seriousness. It has also been shown by Schmeidler that persons who approached experimental work with a favourably disposed attitude were more likely to exhibit  $\psi$ -faculty than those who were highly sceptical.

Some work has been done on the correlation of personality types and intelligence-rating with  $\psi$ -faculty. Speaking generally, the "expansive" type rather than the restricted type favours  $\psi$ -faculty. We do not know much as yet of the effects of glandular dis-balance on the faculty. There was,

however, an unusually high-scoring percipient who averaged about 18 correct guesses out of 25 for 74 runs through the pack, in experiments with Dr. Reiss. This person suffered from hyperthyroidism—and after correction of the condition by medical treatment the scoring rate fell to a chance level.

Our knowledge of the action of drugs on  $\psi$ -faculty is also meagre. Narcotics appear, in general, to diminish the faculty, while stimulants given to counteract the narcosis restore the faculty.

In 1945 Dr. S. G. Soal began a series of experiments with Mrs. Stewart, a high-scoring subject. Indeed, her average scoring for about 17,000 trials was about 28 per cent. Some of these experiments will be described briefly, because they illustrate the development of experimental work and offer us clues to the mode of functioning of  $\psi$ -faculty.

Two criticisms might be levelled against the simple type of card experiment described at the beginning of the previous section : (a) the pack might not always be satisfactorily shuffled so as to secure a random distribution, and (b) the pitch or inflexion of the voice of the agent might offer clues to the percipient. To meet these possibilities Dr. Soal placed the percipient within earshot in an adjacent room, and had two people—the agent and an assistant—sitting on opposite sides of a table. The two latter were separated by a screen across the table, the screen having, however, a 3-inch square aperture in its centre. The agent had five playing cards, each having an animal-picture on the reverse side : Pelican, Zebra, Giraffe, Lion, and Elephant. It was his initial duty to shuffle the cards and place them face downwards in a row. The agent's assistant was furnished with a table of random numbers between 1 and 5, and had five cards with these numbers printed on them. It was his duty to present a number-card at the aperture, and after a short pause to say



aloud "First Guess". The agent would then look at the card indicated (counting from the left end of the row) and then let the card fall back again. If the conditions were not general extra-sensory perception but pure clairvoyance, the agent would merely point to or touch the back of the indicated card. The percipient in the adjacent room recorded his guess and said aloud "Right", whereupon the second trial proceeded. After 50 trials the assistant went to the agent's end of the table, turned over the five animal-cards and recorded the code thus:  $\begin{matrix} 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\ P & E & Z & L & G \end{matrix}$  The percipient usually recorded

his guesses by putting down the initial letter of the animal guessed. After about 400 trials his score cards were decoded into numbers, and these were compared with the assistant's table of random numbers.

By this procedure it will be obvious that both criticisms are met. In particular, the assistant who signals the various trials to the percipient does not know what animal-picture the agent is looking at.

I shall now refer briefly to some of the many and varied experiments which Soal and his collaborators made with Mrs. Stewart, who, in a total of 17,000 trials, averaged a correct score of 7 out of 25.

It was easily possible, unknown to the percipient, to alternate blocks of 50 trials under general extra-sensory conditions with blocks under pure clairvoyant conditions. Two of Dr. Soal's best scorers under G.E.S.P. conditions invariably failed to score above chance under clairvoyant conditions. Their  $\psi$ -faculty was essentially telepathic in its character. In this respect it contrasted with some of Dr. Rhine's best scorers, and with Miss G. J., who worked with G. N. M. Tyrrell.

In one of the experiments in which Mrs. Stewart was

percipient, the agent was instructed, just before the experiment, to turn over the five animal-cards and look at them for 30 seconds before turning them face downwards again. He was to make no effort to remember the order of the five cards; he was merely to look at them. In the experiment, when the assistant presented a number at the aperture in the screen, the agent was merely to tap the back of the animal-card indicated. The success of scoring was not apparently diminished by this procedure, nor was it affected when the agent's preview of the cards was reduced to 5 seconds. For a correct guess by the percipient, obviously two pieces of information were necessary: the order of the animal-cards, and the number of the card chosen (counting from the left). The first of these pieces of information was in the subconscious mind of the agent already. This result suggests strongly that it is not necessary for the agent to retain in his *conscious* mind information he desires to transmit telepathically. The popular idea that some intense effort of conscious concentration is essential to success may be quite ill-founded.

In another experiment with Mrs. Stewart, two agents were used. One of these, sitting behind the screen at the aperture of which random numbers were presented, had five *blank* cards in a row. On presentation of a number he merely tapped the corresponding card. The second agent was in another room, and he had the five animal-cards in a row, at which he was instructed to look for 30 seconds prior to the experiment. The two pieces of information essential to a correct guess were thus in different minds. Again, the degree of success scarcely differed from the normal. Were the two pieces of information first brought together by Mrs. Stewart or by one of the agents, or is the best viewpoint that a common subconscious mental field existed?

In one of the above experiments the following variation

was tried. For 200 trials Mrs. Stewart was given the impression that there was only *one* agent (i.e. that the agent at the table receiving the random numbers was in possession of the animal-cards). For the next 200 trials she was, however, given the true impression (that the two agents were involved). In the first part Mrs. Stewart's score was a little below chance expectation. In the second part she scored 60 correct (compared with a chance expectation of 40). Clearly a correct orientation to the conditions of the experiment is necessary.

### THEORIES OF $\psi$ -FACULTY

Let us consider telepathy, in the first instance, and ask ourselves if we have any clues to its nature. One possible type of theory would be that it is the product of an unrecognised type of electro-magnetic radiation—a kind of cerebral radio. Such a view is seen to be impossible as soon as it is critically examined—and for three reasons :

(a) The electromagnetic type of radiation implies a material transmitter and receiver working on well-recognised principles. There are no such mechanisms known in the human body. (b) The well-known law that the intensity of radiation falls off inversely as the square of distance from the source is incompatible with the experimental evidence that, so far as we know, telepathy is unaffected by distance. (c) All mechanisms of communicating ideas to each other, using material means, such as speaking or writing or telegraphy or the Braille code, require the ideas to be first encoded (in words, usually), then transmitted and finally decoded. The possibility of being understood then depends on two persons using the same alphabet and knowing the same language. No one has ever heard of any encoding or decoding of ideas where, by hypothesis, the channels of sense are not involved.

Thouless and Wiesner have advanced what might be called a psycho-physical theory of telepathy. Suppose we call A the agent and P the percipient. We know that A's mind is intimately related to A's brain. It conveys ideas leading to action to the motor side of the brain, and it receives sensory data leading to ideas from the sensory side of the brain. The same remarks apply to P. If A's mind acquired a temporary relation to P's motor-brain of the same kind as it had to its own motor-brain, this would be called by Thouless and Wiesner  $\alpha$ -telepathy. Alternatively, the mind of P might acquire a temporary relationship to the sensory side of A's brain of the same kind as it has to its own sensory brain, which would be called  $\gamma$ -telepathy. The merit of such a theory is that it explains telepathy in terms of the mind-brain relationship, which is familiar to us even though mysterious. I personally think that while some phenomena may possibly be explained in terms of this theory, telepathy is not one of these. I shall not enter into reasons for this, but mention only that they are based upon a study of spontaneous cases.

We are then left with a purely mental theory of telepathy, viz. that it is a mind-to-mind relationship. That individual minds manifest in a "network" of relationships is, I think, highly probable on the evidence we have before us. That the only modes of communication between minds should be such indirect methods as speech, writing, and signalling would, I think, have always been regarded as an unreasonable supposition had it not been for the (now obsolete) theories of the causal dependence of mind on brain. No similes should be pressed far in attempting to convey what we understand by a mind-to-mind relationship, since these are very crude and imperfect. In a network where the intersections or knots represent individuals, a displacement may spread out from one point and in some degree affect all

others. In a railway system the main cities may represent a group of minds which are intimately related by their character and affinity, and on these lines of communication there may be much traffic both ways. But the more remote towns and villages are part of the whole system of relationships, and with these there are also lines of communication even though little used. Again, we may picture the emergence of island peaks (individual minds) from the sea of matter, with the knowledge that the islands are all emergent from the submarine land-mass (the collective unconscious of Jung<sup>2</sup>) We might even picture customary means of communication between islands as seaborne traffic, while recognising the possibility of other extra-sensory communication via the submarine land-mass—so that a tremor on one island spreads out and is felt on the others. We would stress again that such picturesque modes of thinking are not to be taken too seriously, but may serve to convey an impression of the right kind in this obscure field.

Carington accepts a purely mental theory of telepathy, but in a special form which he based upon the psychological fact of the association of ideas. It is well recognised that if in an individual mind two ideas, say A and B, are linked together, then the subsequent presentation of B to consciousness makes it likely that A also will emerge. Carington's idea, simply stated, is that the presentation of B to *another* person's mind will result in an increased likelihood of A emerging in that mind also.

On such a view telepathy would be expected to take place more freely between persons who have a large number of ideas in common. In card experiments perhaps the "idea of experimenting" is such a common "B-idea", but in many of the spontaneous cases the naming of the common associational link is difficult and often seems far-fetched. I think that the psychological mechanism of idea-association may

affect the mode of emergence into consciousness of telepathically communicated ideas. It is, however, too small a base on which to build a satisfactory theory of telepathy, which fundamentally involves a relationship between minds at unconscious levels. We do not know enough as yet to formulate such a theory, but we do know that the telepathic affinities between different minds differ widely. I do not know of any work correlating these degrees of affinity with the number and type of ideas held in common.

### THE PROBLEM OF CLAIRVOYANCE

The problem of clairvoyance seems at first sight to present real difficulties, for here we have the apprehension by a mind of something different in kind, viz. what the plain man calls "matter". This basic assumption (following Descartes) of two orders of phenomena is the background of the plain man's thinking, and since this book is written for ordinary people—not philosophers—we shall adopt it here and look at clairvoyance with this background. The most useful working hypothesis is, then, that there is a "substance"—which we may label perhaps a "psychic æther" which is intermediate between matter and mind. This must partake of some of the qualities of matter such as the occupation of space and a degree of permanence of form, and it must also have qualities akin to mind in sustaining and carrying emotions and thought-images. This psychic æther is malleable and moulded by matter so that it forms what might be called ætheric duplicates. A truer statement would perhaps be that the ætheric duplicate is the model on which the material structure is condensed. It is this ætheric duplicate which the mind apprehends in clairvoyance and through which it manipulates matter in psycho-kinesis (see Chapter V), and in materialisation phenomena (see Chapter VI). On the other hand, the psychic æther linked with a material

object can be impregnated with mental characteristics, i.e. with emotionally toned ideas. The apprehension of this by a sensitive's mind may be regarded as the basis of "object-reading" (see Chapter IV); or, if there is an intense concentration of emotional energy, it may be the basis of hauntings (see Chapter VII), and in certain special cases of poltergeist phenomena (see Chapter V). This hypothesis of a psychic æther is a unifying one of considerable range and power; it bridges the gap between matter and mind, and becomes a convenient vehicle for interpreting all these para-normal phenomena.

In the case of Man himself, we should anticipate a complicated vehicle intermediate between man's body and man's mind—for the psychic æther which stands in this special relationship is moulded to the physical body, and also the functional bridge or piece of mechanism which allows body and mind to interact. There is, indeed, a persistent tradition in ancient Hindu and Egyptian literature of a "vital" or ætheric body,<sup>1</sup> and the same idea is found in much occult writing—which purports to be the fruit of intuitive knowledge, or at least of the exercise of para-normal faculty. For my own part, I regard it as a useful and reasonable hypothesis likely to prove of increasing value in relation to psychical research and an understanding of the complex field of man's own nature. I think it is in this region of an ætheric body that we shall find clues to a deeper understanding of such varied phenomena as healing by the use of the hands, mesmerism, the nature of some types of insanity, water-divining, magic, and, indeed, to many basic biological phenomena. I think we may come to find the hypothesis of a psychic æther as useful as the hypothesis of matter in clarifying the description of phenomena and in suggesting new directions for experimental enquiry.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. *The Psychic Sense*: PAYNE and BENDIT (Faber & Faber).

Perhaps the reader is a little shocked at my regarding the existence of matter as a hypothesis. He may regard it as indisputable. This is one of the points at which the ordinary common-sense viewpoint differs widely from the philosopher's view. It would take us too far afield to justify this statement—indeed, it would plunge us into that difficult branch of study called metaphysics. When we look below the surface of things and ask such questions as how we come to know things and what is the relation between sense-data and objects of knowledge, we come to realise that the plain man's view is far from satisfactory. Many of us are compelled to recognise that if matter in some useful sense exists, it is of the nature of mind or a product of mind. When one comes to this position, it becomes clear that the hypothesis of a psychic æther has no better status than that of matter—although it may be a useful aid to clear exposition and fruitful thought in this domain of enquiry.

#### $\psi$ -FACULTY IN NATURE

While the majority of observations of  $\psi$ -faculty are on the human level, it is reasonable to look for evidence of its operation on sub-human levels. This is obviously a field where a good deal of research should be done, but indications of its existence at this level are not lacking. The sensibility of a good sheep-dog to the shepherd's whistle suggests a measure of rapport between the mind of the dog and his master. That the whistle alone accounts for the intelligence of the dog's actions will seem to many an inadequate explanation. Wholly on the sub-human level, we have the sudden deviation of shoals of minnows, the wheeling of flocks of birds, the simultaneous action of myriads of fire-flies, the apparently purposive and co-ordinated action of insect communities (bees, ants, termites, etc.). These phenomena lead us to speculate whether in fact there is not



something akin here to a group-mind controlling the whole as a unit—a kind of mental field which conforms the behaviour of individual units to the pattern through a kind of  $\psi$ -faculty. With rise in the evolutionary scale we find, of course, a growing ability to depart from the controlling field and create distinctive individual patterns of behaviour. This we find in domestic animals. The problems of bird migration and their seemingly intelligent behaviour, the route-finding and the timing, suggest again the exercise by a group-mind of  $\psi$ -faculty closely allied to what we have labelled as clairvoyance and precognition.

The study of primitive peoples from this particular standpoint is likely to be fruitful in its data. Trustworthy observers have reported the spreading of news among primitive peoples with a rapidity inexplicable by any ordinary means. It would seem plausible to suggest that here individuals can make easy contact with the primitive group mind from which they are less insulated than more advanced peoples. Dr. John Layard tells of "primitive peoples who quite suddenly will all act of one accord with no visible or audible cause" (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XLVII, p. 239, 1944).

Dr. Layard says :

"I instanced the other day the case of the anthropologist accompanied by a native in the depths of the African bush when distant drums were suddenly heard, whereon the native fell on his face saying : 'The Chief of So-and-so is dead.' The anthropologist thought, 'Now I shall be able to solve the riddle of drum-signals', and asked his companion just what rhythm it was that had given this very precise information. The native looked wonderingly at him. The anthropologist insisted, but met with an uncomprehending gaze. It finally transpired that the drum-signal was a perfectly common-or-garden one, simply telling the native

to internalise his attention, whereupon the native had seen the image of the chief's dead face conveyed not through the cerebro-spinal system, but, as I believe, through the sympathetic nervous system through which as with the insects this form of communication occurs."

It is quite clear that the biological field and the abundant data of natural history should provide one of the most interesting areas of enquiry in relation to  $\psi$ . When we reflect upon the amazing behaviour patterns—of the web-spinning spider doing something in a novel situation without tutorial assistance or practice; of creatures of a lowly order preparing a food supply essential to the welfare of a future progeny which they will never see—we have in these concepts of psychical research clues to biological mysteries which are far more promising than the naïve supposition of inheritable brain tracks. Professor A. C. Hardy, F.R.S., of Oxford, has recently made such exploratory incursions into this field (*Journ. S.P.R.*, p. 225, 1950; *Proc. S.P.R.*, p. 96, 1953).

#### SOME REFLECTIONS AND SPECULATIONS

I am convinced, after studying a representative part of the enormous mass of recorded evidence, that  $\psi$ -faculty—including telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition—is an established fact. The wealth of observation, the variety of experiment, the precautions taken to exclude fraud, and the abundant criticisms of experimental work which have been reasonably met are such as to establish these things with the same confidence as that which is given to the foundations of other basic sciences. When we start to reflect on the implications of  $\psi$ -faculty, it becomes apparent that here is an order of phenomena with its own laws, and that a deeper understanding of these may revolutionise our outlook on the world around us. The conception of a psychic æther—even though

from a metaphysical standpoint it has no better status than the concept of "matter"—opens to us a new world of significant energies and forces which will profoundly affect many fields of scientific enquiry—biology, physiology, psychology, and philosophy. It seems obvious that the old scientific materialism is completely undermined.

The fact that minds may be in communication when the brains to which those minds are related are thousands of miles apart throws into a new perspective any theories of mind and brain, and suggests, even if it does not prove, that mind has no causal dependence on brain. Bergson holds the view that the physical brain is primarily an organ of action, and that perception serves the practical purpose of guiding action. As a means of gathering knowledge, he believes the function of the brain is secondary; such knowledge could be gathered otherwise by the mind. The brain is, in fact, an organ of limitation so far as the mind is concerned, focusing the latter's attention on to the material environment. It is only in certain states when the close linkage of mind and brain is loosened that the wider  $\psi$ -faculties of the mind become apparent.

The question is sometimes raised as to whether  $\psi$ -faculty, by reason of its greater accessibility to primitive peoples and the greater part which it plays on the sub-human level, is not a submerged or even vestigial faculty overlaid by the growth in importance of the brain and special senses. Some have taken this view, and remarked on the vastly greater reliability and precision of the special senses for knowledge of the immediate environment. Others have tended to regard  $\psi$ -faculty as an extension of the mind's awareness in a "higher" direction, and look upon it as something whose development might make available to us knowledge and understanding far beyond the range of sensorily acquired knowledge.

I incline to the opinion that both views are right but that the assumption that these views refer to the same thing is wrong. It may prove necessary to define lower- $\psi$  and higher- $\psi$  modes of communication concerned respectively with the ætheric level and the higher-mind. The first of these has perhaps been submerged in the evolution of man; the second of these may prove his gateway to greater knowledge and insight.

It should perhaps be unnecessary to say that the field of psychical research has no more to do with religion or with a "spiritual" world than has physics or physiology. This idea is, however, not uncommon, and it derives, I suppose, from the naïve assumption that what is non-material is *ipso facto* "spiritual". The fact is that there are many significant levels of phenomena lying behind the superficial one which we call physical and to which our senses respond. The region of psychical research is not far removed from the physical, and extends through the level we have labelled "ætheric" up to that of mind. But beyond higher-mind lie ranges of greater significance, and it is into these more sublime regions that we must penetrate if we are concerned with spiritual things and the values of life.

#### *Books for Further Reading*

1. *The Experimental Situation in Psychical Research*: S. G. SOAL (F. W. H. Myers' Memorial Lecture, 1947; S.P.R., 31 Tavistock Square, W.C.1).
2. *The Personality of Man*: G. N. M. TYRRELL (Pelican Books).
3. *The Reach of the Mind*: J. B. RHINE (Faber & Faber, 1948).

## CHAPTER III

### PRECOGNITION AND RETROCOGNITION

CAN we have knowledge of the future? There are of course many examples of reliable prediction, such as of future eclipses or times of high tide at a particular place, but these are all based upon observation of past sequences of events. We are interested not in these but in prediction or foreknowledge which cannot be based upon the past and therefore where rational inference is not involved. There must be few people who have not come across some instance of prophecy or "second-sight", or some fragment of a dream-memory which is subsequently fulfilled. Most people remark on the "coincidence", but few are disposed to consider seriously that there may be a determinate future which under certain circumstances may become known, for if there were it would seem that the existence of free-will is in jeopardy.

Our first concern therefore is to look at typical data which conform to the following conditions :

1. An ostensible precognition or piece of foreknowledge should have been recorded in writing and handed on to someone else, or told verbally to someone, or acted upon in a significant manner, *before* the subsequent incident verifies it.

2. It should either be sufficiently detailed or unusual in its character to make chance coincidence unlikely.

#### SPONTANEOUS CASES

*Case 5* (from *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XI, p. 505).

The account is written by Mr. Alfred Cooper, who was

attending the Duke of Hamilton, and it is countersigned by the Duchess of Hamilton.

"A fortnight before the death of the late Earl of L., in 1882, I called upon the Duke of Hamilton, in Hill Street, to see him professionally. After I had finished seeing him we went into the drawing-room, where the Duchess was, and the Duke said to me, 'Oh, Cooper; how is the Earl?'

"The Duchess said, 'What Earl?' and on my answering 'Lord L.', she replied, 'That is very odd. I have had a most extraordinary vision. I went to bed, but after being in bed a short time, I was not exactly asleep, but thought I saw a scene as if from a play before me. The actors in it were Lord L., in a chair, as if in a fit, with a man standing over him with a red beard. He was by the side of a bath, over which bath a red lamp was distinctly shown.'

"I then said, 'I am attending Lord L. at present; there is very little the matter with him, he is not going to die; he will be all right very soon.'

"Well, he got better for a week and was nearly well, but at the end of six or seven days after this I was called to see him suddenly. He had inflammation of both lungs.

"I called in Sir William Jenner, but in six days he was a dead man. There were two male nurses attending on him; one had been taken ill. But when I saw the other the dream of the Duchess was exactly represented. He was standing near a bath over the Earl and, strange to say, his beard was red. There was the bath with the red lamp over it. It is rather rare to find a bath with a red lamp over it, and this brought the story to my mind.

"The vision seen by the Duchess was told two weeks before the death of Lord L. It is a most remarkable thing."

It appears that the Duchess only knew Lord L. by sight

and had not heard that he was ill. She knew she was not asleep, for she opened her eyes to get rid of the vision and, shutting them, saw the same thing again.

*Case 6* (from *Foreknowledge*, pp. 64-5 : H. F. SALTMARSH. G. Bell & Sons Ltd.):

"In 1928 he [Mr. Calder] was appointed headmaster of Holmfirth Secondary School in Yorkshire. Before leaving Middlesex, where they then resided, Mrs. Calder, who had never been to Yorkshire, dreamed of an old grey-stone house, set in a lovely valley through which ran a stream of clear but black-looking water. In their househunting near Holmfirth they came across the very house which Mrs. Calder had seen in her dream; they took it, or rather one half of it, and moved in in August 1928. They found that the water of the stream was frequently discoloured by indigo from a nearby dye-works. In her dream Mrs. Calder had seen that only one half of the house was occupied, and that outside the door of that half was a barrel which was used as a dog-kennel. When they went to live there, though the other half was occupied, there was no barrel. A year or so later there was a change of tenants of the other half of the house. When the new people arrived they brought with them a dog and placed a barrel outside the door for its kennel."

*Case 7* (from *An Experiment with Time*: J. W. DUNNE. A. & C. Black Ltd., 1927):

"I seemed to be standing on high ground—the upper slopes of some spur of a hill or mountain. The ground was of a curious white formation. Here and there in this were little fissures, and from these jets of vapour were spouting upward. In my dream I recognised the place as an island of which I had dreamed before—an island which was in imminent peril from a volcano. And, when I saw the vapour spouting from the ground, I gasped, 'It's the

island ! Good Lord, the whole thing is going to blow up !' For I had memories of reading about Krakatoa, where the sea, making its way into the heart of a volcano through a submarine crevice, flushed into steam and blew the whole mountain to pieces. Forthwith I was seized with a frantic desire to save the four thousand (I knew the number) unsuspecting inhabitants. Obviously there was only one way of doing this, and that was to take them off in ships. There followed a most distressing nightmare, in which I was at a neighbouring island, trying to get the incredulous French authorities to despatch vessels of every and any description to remove the inhabitants of the threatened island. I was sent from one official to another ; and finally woke myself by my own dream exertions, clinging to the heads of a team of horses drawing the carriage of one 'Monsieur le Maire', who was going out to dine, and wanted me to return when his office would be open next day. All through the dream the *number* of the people in danger obsessed my mind. I repeated it to everyone I met, and, at the moment of waking, I was shouting to the 'Maire', 'Listen ! Four thousand people will be killed unless——'

"I am not certain now when we received our next batch of papers, but, when they did come, the *Daily Telegraph* was amongst them, and, on opening the centre sheet, this is what met my eyes :

Volcano Disaster

in

Martinique

---

Town Swept Away

An Avalanche of Flame

Probable Loss of Over 40,000 Lives

British Steamer Burnt



There is one remark to be made here.

"The number of people declared to be killed was not, as I had maintained throughout the dream, 4,000 but 40,000. I was out by a nought. But, when I read the paper, I read, in my haste, that number as 4,000; and in telling the story subsequently, I always spoke of that printed figure as having been 4,000; and I did not know it was really 40,000 until I copied out the paragraph fifteen years later.

"Now, when the next batch of papers arrived, these gave more exact estimates of what the actual loss of life had been; and I discovered that the true figure had nothing in common with the arrangement of fours and noughts I had both dreamed of and gathered from the first report. So my wonderful 'clairvoyant' vision had been wrong in its most insistent particular! But it was clear that its wrongness was likely to prove a matter just as important as its rightness. For *whence*, in the dream, had I got that idea of 4,000? Clearly it must have come into my mind *because of the newspaper paragraph.*"

Case 8 (from *Supernormal Faculties in Man*, p. 175 :  
EUGÈNE OSTY, Methuen & Co., 1923).

Dr. Eugène Osty, who devoted twelve years to the intensive study of sensitives—several of whom had quite exceptional powers of precognition—gives two predictions made in relation to his own life. The first of these, given two years before the event which fulfilled it, was as follows :

"Oh ! Peril of death after a while . . . perhaps an accident . . . but you will be saved, your life continues. . . ."

Four months prior to the event more detail is given :

"Take care, you will soon have a serious accident. . . . I hear a violent shock . . . a loud noise. . . . You will be very near death. . . . What luck ! you will take no hurt ! I see a

man bleeding on the ground; he is moaning, and all round him some things are strewn, I can't say what."

Dr. Osty's account of the event itself on August 15th, 1911, is:

"I was going at an easy pace in my car, when a drunken baker, driving furiously, pulled the wrong rein and collided. The shock was such that the shafts, which struck the frame of the front glass, were shivered to pieces, and one wheel mounted the bonnet and crushed it in. My friend Th. Stenuit, who was with me, and I also, were stricken with amaze at the suddenness of the accident and our good fortune in being unhurt. Turning round we saw the horse galloping off, the cart in the ditch, wheels uppermost, and the baker stretched moaning and bleeding in the middle of the road with a number of loaves scattered round him."

*Case 9 (from Proc. S.P.R., Vol. XI, p. 488):*

"Mrs. C. dreamed that she was being persistently followed by a monkey, and this terrified her as she particularly disliked monkeys. At breakfast, being unable to throw off the unpleasant memories, her husband suggested she should go out for a walk with the children. She adopted this unusual course, and to her horror—in the streets of London—was followed by a monkey."

It would be possible to fill a book with stories of this kind, which fulfil the two conditions mentioned. To appreciate the real weight of evidence a serious student of the subject should be willing to read some of the works mentioned at the end of this chapter.

In examining cases of ostensible precognition, we should first discard those which can be accounted for on any other

ground. Suppose, for example, a person dreams of receiving a letter from someone who has not communicated for some years, and the next day such a letter is received. We might possibly account for this by telepathy between the writer and the recipient, or by clairvoyance on the part of the recipient of the letter then in existence. In Case 6 above we might regard the dream-view of the house, which was already in existence in another place, as an exercise of clairvoyant faculty by Mrs. Calder. The "barrel" incident, however, seems undoubtedly precognitive.

Cases where suggestion or auto-suggestion might have operated as a cause must be viewed with great reserve. For example, where a person foresees his own death or a serious illness coming in spite of apparent good health, auto-suggestion might conceivably be operating towards the fulfilment.

Again, consider the case below :

*Case 10* (from *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol X, p. 332) :

"Being at length tired, I sat down to rest upon a rock at the edge of the water. My attention was quite taken up with the extreme beauty of the scene before me. There was not a sound or movement except the soft ripple of water on the sand at my feet. Presently I felt a cold chill creep through me, and a curious stiffness of my limbs, as if I could not move though wishing to do so. I felt frightened, yet chained to the spot, and as if impelled to stare at the water straight in front of me. Gradually a black cloud seemed to rise, and in the midst of it I saw a tall man, in a suit of tweed, jump into the water and sink.

"In a moment the darkness was gone, and I again became sensible of the heat and sunshine, but I was awed and felt eerie—it was then about four o'clock or so—I cannot remember either the exact time or date. On my

sister's arrival I told her of the occurrence; she was surprised, but inclined to laugh at it. When we got home I told my brother; he treated the subject much in the same manner. However, about a week afterwards a Mr. Espie, a bank clerk (unknown to me), committed suicide by drowning in that very spot. He left a letter for his wife, indicating that he had for some time contemplated his death. My sister's memory of the event is the only evidence I can give. I did not see the account of the inquest at the time, and did not mention my strange experience to anyone saving my sister and brother."

Here we must allow for the possibility of the bank clerk's intention being communicated telepathically to Mrs. Alpine's subconscious mind, and rising into consciousness through a visual vehicle, containing, however, some symbolic elements.

We shall discuss some of this case material later in trying to find a theory of precognition.

#### EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE

It will be quite obvious that the experimental card technique used in the investigation of extra-sensory perception is adaptable to determine the possibility of precognition. The simplest experiment would be to invite a percipient to write down the order of the cards as they *will be* in a pack which is to be shuffled in ten minutes' time. This type of experiment has given results with some sensitives quite outside the range of chance as an explanation. Even when the pack is shuffled by mechanical means and subsequently cut in a manner determined by chance, the scoring remains significant!

We have described briefly in the last chapter Tyrrell's work with G. J. In some of this work, he could, by pressing

a switch, put a relay into the circuit. One of the lamps was preselected by a chance method, but it was not actually lit until the relay worked, and the latter was operated by the first lid opened. The percipient did not necessarily know whether the relay was in action or not. In 1,845 trials without the relay, 28.6 per cent. were scored correct; in 1,855 trials with the relay, 26.2 per cent. were scored correct. In the second case it is clear that a faculty of precognitive clairvoyance is involved—for the lamp was not lit at the time the choice was made.

The experimental work of Dr. S. G. Soal and Mrs. Goldney is of particular value in relation to precognition. Dr. Soal had investigated about 160 persons, hoping to confirm Rhine's general results, but without appreciable success. At the suggestion of Whately Carington he examined his files of data again, looking for the possibility that some of these persons were scoring—not on the contemporary card, but on the card one ahead (or on the card one behind) in time. We call these for brevity the  $+1$  and the  $-1$  cards. Two of the 160 were found to be scoring far beyond chance expectation, sometimes on the  $+1$  card and sometimes on the  $-1$  card. Extensive experiments were later made with these two persons. Mr. Shackleton's faculty appeared to be a displacement of E.S.P. in time, either forwards or backwards by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 seconds, for when the rate of calling of the cards was increased to one call every  $1\frac{1}{2}$  seconds, he scored on the  $+2$  or  $-2$  cards. On the other hand, if the rate of calling was slowed down to one call in 5 seconds, he only scored at the chance level.

The other unusual scorer was Mrs. Stewart, and her faculty showed some different but interesting features. Whereas in 1936 she had shown the  $+1$  and  $-1$  displacement effects, in 1945 her faculty had shifted on to the contemporary card. She was able through 17,000 trials to score

on an average 7 correct out of 25 as compared with the chance expectation of 5. Subsequently there slowly developed in Mrs. Stewart a new and surprising effect, viz. a significant deficiency (i.e. scoring *below* the chance level) on +1 card. This of course is as remarkable as scoring in excess of chance, and indicates para-normal awareness of the +1 card. Dr. Soal surmised that perhaps Mrs. Stewart's subconscious mind resented Mr. Shackleton's reputation, which was built up on his high scoring on the +1 card!

Experiment showed that with both these persons the faculty was exclusively telepathic in its character, and not also clairvoyant, as with G. J. and many of Rhine's workers.

The evidence for precognition would be incomplete without mention of Whately Carington's series of group-experiments which took place over several years. A large number of collaborators in different parts of the country were each supplied with ten forms. Ten experiments took place on ten successive nights. Each evening Carington selected a concrete object, made a drawing of it, and pinned this up in his study from 7 p.m. to 9.30 a.m. The percipients had to draw what they believed each target to be and forward it to Carington. Carington's choice of an object was determined by the chance process of opening mathematical tables at random and using this to determine at what page a dictionary should be opened. The first concrete object was selected. In comparing drawings with the original targets, the problem of degree of resemblance always arises in assessing whether it is a "hit" or a "miss". The statistical analysis used was such that whether the judgment was too rigorous or too lax did not matter. We shall not go into detail about these methods, but refer to the significant conclusions. He found that as the occasion of display of a target was approached the proportion of ostensible hits on the target began to rise, reaching a maximum at the time of its display,

and falling off gradually after this occasion. The incline towards the maximum indicates appreciable precognition of a target which had not then been chosen—but which would be chosen by a chance method 48 hours or 24 hours later! The decline after the maximum indicates appreciable retrocognition. The latter is always viewed of course with less surprise, for an explanation *might* be that the product of  $\psi$ -faculty was received contemporaneously with exhibition of the target picture, but was delayed in its emerging into consciousness. In general, it must be admitted that group-experiments are seldom successful, and Carington's experiments are therefore the more notable.

#### DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEMS

It would be possible to continue giving examples of precognition, both from the field of experimental work and from the records of spontaneous occurrences. I would emphasise again that the serious student who wants to be convinced of the phenomenon itself should read some of the books devoted to it. The distinguished physiologist Charles Richet, at the end of thirty years of careful enquiry, was prepared to say, "Precognition is a demonstrated verity. It is a strange, paradoxical and seemingly absurd fact, but one that we are compelled to admit. . . . The explanation will come (or will not come) later. The facts are none the less authentic and undeniable." I think that most, if not all those who are prepared to read and study the data will be driven to the same conclusion. In the strange field of psychical phenomena it is not a question as to what we should wish to find or wish not to find—but *what are the facts*.

We shall proceed on the assumption that precognition is accepted. Readers of Osty's book will find scores of examples of the faculty exemplified in Case 8. Some sensitives seem able to achieve a kind of telepathic rapport with a

very deep level of the subject's self—a level which we may label “transcendental”, to which the pattern of events which will happen to the physical self is an open book. It looks as if to this transcendental level of each individual, the distinction of past, present, and future, which is so clear-cut for the superficial self, has no marked existence. One is inclined to consider that the transcendental self has substantially laid down a pattern of events through which the superficial self must pass. The former is architect and builder of the residence; one is disposed to add that it also chooses the furnishings. The superficial self can apparently do little more on the physical level than make slight rearrangements of the furniture provided. Its significant activity is, however, the *quality* of life which it lives within this setting.

As we meditate upon life our predisposition may be to accept without surprise the *broad* pattern—the pattern *in outline*. Key points of the pattern, such as Case 8 illustrates, perhaps do not surprise us by their existence; but the existence of the trivial detail, such as the barrel of Case 6 and the monkey of Case 9, comes to us with rather a shock. It does not look like a bare house which is offered to the superficial self, but a fully furnished one—with no option.

The sensitives with whom Dr. Osty was fortunate in working appeared to have had in an unusual degree a capacity for rapport with an individual's transcendental self. Of most sensitives it can be said that their rapport is much more likely to be with the more superficial levels of the mind of the individual. As a consequence of this, it is often fears, hopes, memories, and desires which are withdrawn by the thought-reading process from an individual's mind. Such data are then re-presented to an individual by a sensitive who is in a trance, and this is the commonplace experience of seance rooms, both public and private. It must be emphasised



that the first-class sensitive who is aware of the level of rapport is very rare indeed. Moreover, it must be remembered that a good sensitive may be able to achieve a recognised rapport with the transcendental level of one individual and fail completely with another individual. The evidence of Dr. Hettinger on p. 60 in the next chapter illustrates this. Mrs. L. J. Bendit gives a typical, but impressive, illustration of the same thing (Payne and Bendit: *This World and That*, pp. 158–60. Faber & Faber). She had an astonishing “reading” of her character, work, and interests, together with detailed precognitions which were fulfilled in both the near and more distant future. A friend who was with her, however, received nothing except the customary nonsense from the *same* sensitive.

In Case 5 the Duchess of Hamilton is the sensitive, “picking-up” without any conscious volition a sensational fragment from Lord L.’s transcendental self. In Case 10 Mrs. Alpine plays a similar part in relation to the bank clerk. There is some telepathic quality or affinity—even though we know nothing of its nature—in virtue of which certain minds can, in varying degrees, be in relationship, while others cannot achieve this.

I have always thought that a good case can be made for the view that precognition is essentially precognitive telepathy, i.e. of either a fragment of one’s own future mental state or of another person’s future mental state. Thus in Case 5 the Duchess’s vision may have been either of Mr. Cooper’s future mental state when he would see the drama, or of her own future mental state when Mr. Cooper told her subsequently that he had seen it. In Cases 6, 8, and 9 the sensitive’s own future mental state *may* have been cognised. In Case 7 there is interesting positive evidence that it was so. Here Dunne did not precognise the future material event; it was not precognitive *clairvoyance*, at any rate as

regards the number of lives lost. It was apparently his mental state when reading the newspaper which he precognised, and the particularly interesting feature of this is that he misread the newspaper statement that 40,000 persons were probably lost and believed he had read 4,000. He did not discover this misreading until going through the papers some years afterwards. In his precognitive dream it was the figure 4,000 which haunted him. The Whately Carington experiments could also be regarded as exhibiting on the part of some percipients a cognition of Carington's mental states one day or two days in advance of their occurring.

Outside the possibility of interpretation as precognition of the future mental state of someone is Tyrrell's electrical apparatus with the automatic recording and the relay working. The precognitive clairvoyance which ostensibly took place in this case was, I suppose, of the order of 1 second. It may be that experimental precognitions of this order are to be accounted for in quite a different way from those involving time intervals of days, weeks, and months.

#### SOME THEORIES OF PRECOGNITION

It may be best to state frankly that no satisfactory theory of precognition exists. The problem of Time is one of the most difficult that confronts philosophers, and these difficulties are not made easier by the fact of precognition. Professor A. N. Whitehead, philosopher and mathematician, one of the most outstanding thinkers of our day, once said : "It is impossible to meditate on Time and the mystery of the creative passage of Nature without an overwhelming emotion at the limitations of human intelligence." It is safe to say that in a thousand years' time, when many of the problems of our physical world which now vex scientists will have been resolved or understood as aspects of larger

problems, the problem of the nature of Time will still be debated. The reason for this arises in the peculiarly intimate relationship of our own minds to Time. It is rather like expecting a crane, which has proved its ability to lift other objects, to lift itself. We shall therefore not be able to do more than show what the difficulties are and how some thinkers have suggested that we might try to overcome them.

When the subject of precognition is discussed, we always become involved in three different, though not unrelated, problems. (1) The nature of Time and the status of events in Time. (2) The problem of free-will and determinism. (3) The problem of causation, viz. what causes the precognition.

Expressing it as simply as possible, we may say that the first view regards time as a sort of dimension in which all the events of history are spaced out at appropriate intervals. The events of a person's life might be regarded as the beads stretched out upon a string. One might imagine a narrow slit (with its breadth allowing us to see only one bead at a time) moving in the direction of the string's length. This slit corresponds to the "present" moment. On the first view of time which we may call that of the "Eternal Now", all the events of a lifetime, both those past, those present, and those to come, co-exist. They have the same status or degree of reality. The observer looking through the slit only experiences them in succession because the slit is moving. The other view recognises the past as fixed and unalterable, but the future as blank and still to be created. It is as though the beads on the one side of the slit were missing, while on the other side they were "there" in some historical sense—although inaccessible—while new ones were being created within the interval of the slit as it moved onwards into the future. On the first of these views, where all events in some sense co-exist in time (which we shall call Time<sub>1</sub>), the main problem with which we have to deal is that of the existence

and meaning of free-will. The problem of causation of precognition of a future event does not seem insoluble, when we can assume the event is already in existence. On the other view of time, where the future is a blank and hence the precognised event does not yet exist, how can we have knowledge about it? How can a non-existent event be the cause of present knowledge? This view preserves a place for free-will in the creative movement of the slit, but it leaves the cause of precognition obscure.

There is perhaps a third view of Time intermediate between these two. We may call it the theory of a plastic future. The idea is that there is some kind of a future in existence in the sense that it would inevitably result from causes existing in the past and present, provided no new unpredictable factor is introduced by the exercise of free-will. It would envisage a precognition as a view of the future, as it is *at the moment of the precognition*. Presumably if a new factor is introduced subsequently and another precognition of that region of the future obtained, it would differ from the first. The future is only frozen into its unalterable form when it passes through the chilling chamber of the present moment. This view attempts clearly to preserve free-will, and yet have some kind of ghost-future which can be the cause of precognitions. The difficulty of this view, attractive though it is in many ways, is to make precognition of this ghost-future a very superior kind of inference—which borders on omniscience. It is not a cognition of the future which *will* be, it is an inference of the future conditioned by present factors. Osty seemed to lean towards this view of a plastic future, and noted that greater precision and detail were precognised by the sensitive as the event drew nearer to actualisation. When one considers the innumerable factors which contribute to any event—such as the collision of Case 8, for example, or the order of the cards in

a pack which has been placed in a mechanical shuffler—any process of inference seems ruled out, and a cognisable future of some kind must therefore exist. Perhaps the chief difficulties arise in our assumptions. We assume that physical events are physically determined by the law of cause and effect, and we look back over casual chains of events with innumerable interlinkings like a network. We assume, with our sense-centred thinking, that in such a network of material events are all the clues—both causes and effects—if only we could disentangle them. What if the physical pattern of events is *only* or chiefly a level of effects, the product of the out-working of factors which operate on a deeper level—say the level of Mind? What if there is a World of Mind, full of created possibilities, some of which are causal so far as the physical level is concerned, but which do not necessarily on their own level stand in a causal relation to each other? Perhaps in this world of Mind, Imagination is the great creative force, and the created things there are not related in causal chains? Is it possible that we are running down a blind alley in looking for causal relationships everywhere in the physical scene? No one doubts that there is a valid domain of such relationships in physics and chemistry, for example, but have we in our scientific enthusiasm given them a universal application which they are far from possessing? Perhaps causal relationships have only a very limited domain on the physical level, and their really significant and important domain is in relating the world of mind to the physical world.

Such ideas may seem heresy or nonsense to the reader of this book; but if they seem queer, I shall plead that we have queer data to account for. Let us leave these speculations and return to a brief survey of ideas about precognition.

J. W. Dunne wrote an interesting and stimulating book in 1927 called *An Experiment with Time*. He made over many

years a close study of his own dreams and found that occasionally he had dreams of an unusually vivid kind which proved to be substantially precognitive. Apart from these he considered that many dreams contain fragments and distortions of futuristic material as well as material drawn from the past. He adopted the hypothesis of an "Eternal Now"—not as applicable to some transcendental level of Reality, but as applicable to the physical order. All events co-exist. The Battle of Hastings is still being fought, Brutus is still stabbing Cæsar, and our remote ancestors are still hanging from the trees by their tails—just as much as they ever were. The string of "bead-events" is ordinary Time<sub>1</sub>. But since we can only peer through the slit, we see them only one at a time. The slit, however, is moving, and to account for this we must postulate Time<sub>2</sub> to time the movement of the slit in Time<sub>1</sub>. Then it follows that since Time<sub>2</sub> is flowing, we must postulate Time<sub>3</sub> to account for this rate of flow, etc. The nature of Time eludes us—or as Dunne would say—it is an infinite series. When we look at the Observer who is interested in the events, we find that he also comprises an infinite series of observers. Observer<sub>1</sub> is really the string with the beads. He is the sum of all the physical events which have happened to him between birth and death. But there is another aspect of him—Observer<sub>2</sub>, who looks through the slit and to whom Time<sub>2</sub> is related closely, and so on. When philosophers find themselves led to serial concepts, they usually look again at their basic assumptions to see what is wrong. Dunne, however, conceives of a serial universe, and develops these ideas. At this point I believe he is wrong. His mistake was fundamentally in treating Time as though it were a dimension of space. Moreover, if the "Eternal Now" concept is true, I cannot regard its truth as applicable to the level of physical events. If it is true, it can only, in my opinion, have relevance to some Timeless state of consciousness—of which we know nothing.

Precognition is not, however, fundamentally difficult to account for on Dunne's views. Briefly, he considers that the attention of Observer<sub>2</sub> is limited to the focus of attention of Observer<sub>1</sub>—in the normal waking state. If Observer<sub>1</sub> sleeps, however, or otherwise relaxes, then the attention of Observer<sub>2</sub> can wander over an appreciable range of Time<sub>1</sub>, which may include data both in the past and future of Observer<sub>1</sub>. In terms of our analogy, the slit may widen in states of sleep or relaxation of Observer<sub>1</sub>.

H. F. Saltmarsh has put forward a view (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XLII, 1934) of the mechanism of precognition which is a slight variant of Dunne's. The "specious present" (i.e. the width of the slit in our analogy) is normally regarded as a fraction of a second for the conscious part of the mind. Suppose, however, for a deeper level of the subconscious mind, the "specious present" was greater. Then clearly the latter might apprehend a group of events as present, which so far as the conscious mind was concerned were partly past, partly present, and partly future. If one of the latter was thrown up into consciousness, it would be regarded as precognition. I think this type of theory may account for the card-precognition experiments, where the specious present of a subconscious level is perhaps 4 or 5 seconds. It is difficult, however, to believe that precognitions involving days, months, and even years can be explained in this way. It is difficult—but perhaps this is the way we ought to think: Suppose that far deeper than this subconscious level with a specious present of a few seconds, there is a transcendental level of the self for which the specious present is very extensive, if not infinitely wide? We have then arrived at an "Eternal Now"—or so it would be described by the conscious part of our minds. I cannot, however, conceive of it as a continuum in which all physical events inhere (as Dunne does), but only as a state of consciousness in which all imaginable possibilities are inherent.

Another type of hypothesis put forward tentatively by C. D. Broad is a two-dimensional theory of time (*Proc. Aristotelian Soc. Supp.*, Vol. XVI, 1937). I shall not attempt to expound it here; it involves some novel ideas. All I can say is that no one has so far felt any deep conviction that this is the key to the mysteries!

In attempting to account for precognition, I have elsewhere (*The Imprisoned Splendour*, p. 166. Hodder & Stoughton, 1953) suggested that if all precognition can be assimilated to precognitive telepathy, we are dealing obviously with a mental series of events. We then have a precognition (P), and at a later point of time the event (E), which are related together in some way. I speculated on p. 51 that on the level of mind events are perhaps not linked in causal chains. (Jung's principle of synchronicity may have its roots in this level.) Without developing this thought here—and supposing there is a causal relationship between P and E—what is its nature? We should be disposed to reject completely the suggestion that P causes E. Another possibility is that both P and E are effects, one earlier and one later, of a common causal ancestor which preceded them both. Thus in Case 10 it is possible that contemplation of suicide by the bank clerk caused both Mrs. Alpine's precognition and the later event. It is obvious, however, that in Cases 5 to 9 such an explanation will not fit. I have therefore suggested that E may be the cause of P. These are both mental events. Perhaps we have been oblivious to the possibility that on *this* level the future may contribute equally with the past, or may even act alone, to cause the present. On the physical level we have become accustomed always to look for causes of events in the past, and this may have misled us. But of course on such a view we leave unsolved the status of the future event E. Presumably it must exist if it is to be a cause of something else.



Of the problem of free-will we have so far said nothing. It is difficult to say anything worth while until we are clear about the background against which we view it, viz. that of the "Eternal Now"—that of a plastic future or that of a blank future. If the first of these is our assumption in the way in which Dunne interprets it, there seems no room for free-will. The second view attempts to provide a "provisional" future, which while allowing us to account for precognition leaves room for modification of the foreseen "future" by acts of human volition. Saltmarsh has pointed out, quite logically, that because certain events have been precognised—we should not necessarily assume that *all* future events can be precognised. We have already discussed the difficulties of this theory. We shall leave the subject in this unsatisfactory state; but we foreshadowed this would be the case.

#### RETROCOGNITION

This is the complementary phenomenon which, if we accept precognition as factual, would be expected also to exist. It is the non-inferential cognition of events in the past which are outside the range of a person's memory. It has not received the attention accorded to precognition, and this is probably due to the fact that its existence would not appear to create the same philosophical problems as the latter. But another reason probably is that the verification of retrocognition implies either that the data are in a living mind or exist somewhere in documentary form, and are therefore theoretically accessible to clairvoyance.

One of the most famous and frequently quoted causes of retrocognition is that of Miss C. A. E. Moberly and Miss E. F. Jourdain, who were respectively Principal and Vice-Principal of St. Hugh's College, Oxford. The full story is told in the book *An Adventure*, first published in 1911—a

book which has passed through several editions. It is an account of a visit they made to the Petit Trianon in Versailles in 1901, during which they ostensibly saw the gardens as they were in the mid-eighteenth century in the time of Marie Antoinette. They met eight persons there whose behaviour, dress, and manner seemed to them at the time rather peculiar, and they saw many features of the grounds and palace which did not correspond with what they afterwards found to be the reality. They undertook considerable research in French national archives to check up on the strange appearances of their first visit, and the whole case that is presented is remarkable and impressive. It has very properly been subject to close critical scrutiny by several authorities (e.g. *Journ. S.P.R.*, p. 178, 1950; p. 117, 1953, etc.), but it still stands as the most detailed account of a retrocognitive experience described by two trustworthy persons.

A number of further experiences will be found in Myers : *Human Personality*, Vol. I, pp. 591-4 (1903). I shall briefly describe only one other, given by Miss Edith Olivier in Chapter XVI of her book *Without Knowing Mr. Walkley* (Faber & Faber, 1939). Some years elapsed before she realised that it had para-normal features. She was driving a small car from Devizes to Swindon between 5 and 6 p.m. on a wet October evening in 1916. She left the main road and found herself passing along a strange avenue "through a succession of huge grey megaliths which stood on either hand, looming like vast immovable shadows within a curtain of softly falling rain". She assumed she must be approaching Avebury, which she had not visited before but of which she knew as having been once the site of a circular megalithic temple. At the end of the avenue she climbed on to an earthwork which surrounded the temple and saw the great stones, some standing and others fallen, with cottages interspersed among them.

On this night she apparently "saw" a village fair in progress, with flares and torches from the booths and the usual accompaniments of the fair. Nine years later, when visiting Avebury with a friend, Miss Olivier discovered from a guide-book that a fair had been held annually in Avebury, but that it was abolished in 1850. When she visited Avebury the next year in order to study the monument as a member of a learned society, she discovered that the avenue of megaliths up which she believed she had driven on her first visit had disappeared before 1800. Ostensibly she must have had a retrocognitive experience, viewing the scene as it may have been in the eighteenth century.

The retrocognitive vision, in contrast with the precognitive type, seems to be generally associated with a particular place or locality. Whether this is an essential feature of it, we do not know enough to say. In so far as it is so, we may perhaps regard it as a special type of object-reading to which brief reference will be made in the next chapter.

### *Books for Further Reading*

1. *Foreknowledge*: H. F. SALTMARSH (G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., 1938).
2. *Supernormal Faculties in Man*: EUGÈNE OSTY (Methuen & Co., 1923; translated by Stanley de Brath).
3. *An Experiment with Time*: J. W. DUNNE (A. & C. Black, 1929).
4. "A Symposium on Knowledge and Foreknowledge" in *Proc. Aristotelian Soc. Supp.*, Vol. XVI, pp. 177-245 (1937).

## CHAPTER IV

### OBJECT-READING OR PSYCHOMETRY

THERE are some sensitives who, if handed an object, are able to proffer information about the person or persons who have touched the object. Such information may be very detailed—of their physical appearance, idiosyncrasies, character, and interests, of their environment, of past events in their lives, and occasionally even of events which are still in the future. In the light of what we have already discussed of psychic faculty, the simplest interpretation of the facts would seem to be that the object acts as a link, enabling the sensitive to achieve telepathic rapport with some level of the person to whom the object belongs. Once the rapport is established, the object plays no essential part. One might almost describe it as a locus of psychic finger-prints, enabling the author of them to be identified! We shall follow our usual course of looking first at representative data which establish the probability of the phenomenon itself. We can then consider how it is related to other aspects of  $\psi$ -faculty.

#### WORK OF DR. J. HETTINGER

Dr. Hettinger is an electrical engineer and, following some years of research, he wrote in 1940 and 1941 two books which embodied his data and conclusions. This work has been vigorously criticised by Scott (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XLIX, p. 16, 1949), and although Hettinger's conclusions may not be fully justified, his work is valuable as a pioneer effort to establish the phenomenon by statistical methods on a reliable basis. The work was carried out with the aid of two pro-

fessional mediums, and the procedure was as follows. Hettinger took with him to each sitting, which was of about an hour's duration, some half-dozen different articles in sealed envelopes. These were of great variety—pens, pencils, wallets, watches, rings, letters, hair, etc.—and were obtained from different persons. Each envelope was handed in turn to the sensitive, who might touch it (or perhaps merely “concentrate” on it), and would proceed to make on an average a dozen statements about the person to whom the object belonged. Dr. Hettinger did not know, when handing over the envelope, whose object it contained, otherwise the statements might be of knowledge drawn by the medium telepathically from his mind. In checking up the correctness of the medium's statements, it would be of no scientific value to present a list of these to the person about whom they were made and ask for a judgment of their correctness. Clearly one or two strikingly unusual statements which were admitted as correct would carry much weight, but the incorrect majority always leave the question open as to how far “chance” or “coincidence” can be stretched. Hettinger therefore devised a number of control methods, of which the following may be regarded as typical. The original statements made by the medium were mixed with an equal number of spurious statements drawn at random from a large number of those made previously by the sensitive about other persons. The subject was then asked to indicate which were regarded as applicable and which were not applicable. In this way Hettinger was able to determine the number of items regarded as correct from among the sensitive's original statements and the number correct from the equal number of spurious or control statements. If the first of these substantially exceeded the second, we should have evidence of para-normal faculty on the part of the sensitive.

A variety of control methods was used, and we shall not

consider them here. As typical of the results obtained, we may quote a series of experiments in which 76 different objects yielded 948 statements. Of these 328, or 34.5 per cent., were claimed as correct, while from 948 control statements only 222 or 23.5 per cent. were claimed correct. This latter percentage would be regarded as a measure of the likelihood that an applicable statement would be made by chance. The total time involved with the two sensitives was 623 hours and 6,631 statements were made. Of these 38.75 per cent. were regarded as applicable, while from an equal number of control statements only 28.85 per cent. were accepted. The sensitive scored 34 per cent. better than the control.

Among the general observations made by Hettinger are some which, if true, are of importance in formulating any theory of the faculty.

(a) The nature of the objects is not significant, nor are the emotional or sentimental associations of the object for the owner of significance.

(b) Handling of the objects by the sensitive is not essential to the exercise of the faculty.

(c) The degree of the sensitive's response differs from subject to subject. In a long series of experiments some subjects had on different occasions presented a number of articles, and it was found that the sensitive was reasonably consistent in the degree of success (or otherwise) attained.

(d) Of the correct statements, an attempt to find their relevance to the past, present, and future of the subject resulted as follows: 33 per cent. were true from 14 to 5 days prior to the experiment, 25 per cent. true from 5 days to 1 day prior to the experiment, 32 per cent. true on the day of the experiment, and 10 per cent. applicable at the time of the experiment. Reference to the future was rare.

(e) Many correct statements concerned experiences of the

subject between the time he had parted with the article and the time of the experiment.

(f) The sensitive cannot always distinguish between the owner of an article and someone associated with the owner.

All these observations are consistent with the view that the exercise of the faculty is essentially one of telepathic rapport between the minds of the sensitive and the owner of the article. The question may be raised as to the origin of the 60 per cent. incorrect statements made by these sensitives. Some may be guesses; others may be items stimulated by the association of ideas in the sensitive's mind; other items may arise through temporary rapport with the mind of the experimenter or with minds closely linked to the subject's mind. Finally, it is always possible that the subject who checks the list may overlook significant points.

In his second book the tests were of a rather different kind. The subject, whose article was presented to the sensitive, was asked to co-operate by reading or looking at pictures in an illustrated magazine or prepared album. He marked on each page the time at which it was viewed. The sensitive's statements were timed to coincide with this activity of the subject. Many striking resemblances were found. Although Hettinger did not do so in this work it would doubtless have been possible to adopt a control system making statistical evaluation possible.

This valuable piece of pioneering work should be repeated and extended by others. In spite of severe criticism of Hettinger's work, it lends, in my opinion, considerable support to the view that this is a genuine faculty.

#### WORK OF DR. EUGÈNE OSTY

Dr. Osty, a French investigator, has provided many notable examples of object-reading in his book *Supernormal Faculties in Man* (Methuen & Co, 1923).

*Case of G. M.*

"On March 13th, 1915, M. Emile Boirac, Rector of the Academy of Dijon, asked me in course of conversation to give him an instance of Mme Morel's metagnomic output.

"I said, 'The best example would be an impromptu experiment. Have you anything belonging to a person known to you well enough to enable you to judge of what she may say?'

"Boirac took some papers from his pocket, hesitated in his choice, and finally handed to me a little manual of Esperanto.

"In absolute ignorance of the person whose book this might be, I put it into the hands of Mme Morel, hypnotised, asking her to speak of the life of the person to whom it belonged.

"She said, 'A young man appears to me, tall and rather slight. There is nothing very characteristic in his appearance but his eyes, which are not like those of other people. There is nothing wrong with them, but their form is peculiar. . . .

" 'I see this young man for a long while in a place where there is no danger . . . he was there with many other men. . . . Then one day, one morning, he departs with others . . . a long march . . . he then goes in a train. I see him a little later with others in a kind of hole . . . he is standing up with shining eyes. . . . I hear much noise. . . . I see fury in his brain; he goes up. . . . What a noise I hear! He feels a blow and falls . . . gets up . . . receives another blow, and falls afresh with others on a road . . . on one side I see grass and cultivated land, on the other side grey mud. He is wounded in the throat and head by a piece of iron. . . . I see a hole on one side . . . he is in



pain . . . he remains long on the ground. . . . I see him white and pale . . . then there is quiet . . . there are men there who take him up gently . . . he is tall and heavy . . . then they wrap him up . . . he moves a little . . . they take him away in a kind of carriage with other wounded men . . . there is confusion . . . a man bends over him and takes some papers and something round and hard . . . they are keeping this wounded man as a prisoner . . . he still lives . . . then everything is blurred. . . . I no longer hear his breath. . . . I see no more. He is not far from the place where he fell. . . . His body will be found . . . it is near a church. . . . I see vaults near him . . . like a quarry. . . . To right and left there are woods. One can walk under these stones, they are as it were vaults. . . . To find him one must go towards the frontage of the church, going up the road nearly facing the church, and looking in the wood. . . . There are many there . . . he is there. . . . There is no stream there; the earth is dry.'

"On March 15th I sent M. Boirac the account above. On the 24th he wrote to me :

" 'The little manual of Esperanto that I gave you was taken from the civilian clothing left at my house by the son of one of my friends. The young man was afterwards a second-lieutenant in the 27th Regiment, killed or missing on December 12th in a trench attack at the Bois-Brule.

" 'G. M. was aged twenty-five or twenty-six, tall, slight, face rather long, and his eyelids had a slight fold, like the Chinese, serious and quiet expression. . . . As far as is known, he was wounded leading the attack, but continued at the head of his men, then fell at the edge of the German trench which is still in the hands of the enemy.

" 'The first wound seems to have been in the shoulder, the second in the head. The body is supposed to have been

taken up by the Germans and buried by them, but there is no certainty. He was returned as "missing". The vision is therefore correct, with some particulars that cannot be ascertained. I can state that the little book was touched by G. M. some months before the scene to which it gave rise. It had remained with M. Boirac while this young man passed through the last stages of his life.' "

I quote one more case of Dr. Osty. He was approached by M. Mirault, manager of the estates of Baron Joubert, to ask if he would help in tracing an old man of eighty-two who had been missing for sixteen days, and of whom no trace could be found. The estates covered about 2,750 acres of woodland. Dr. Osty asked only for a description of the old man, and was given a neck-wrapper belonging to him and taken from his wardrobe. The detail of this case is very impressive (see pp. 104-8 *Supernormal Faculties in Man*), and it is necessary to give an abbreviated summary here. Three sittings were held with Mme Morel as the sensitive. When in deep hypnosis the neck-wrapper was placed in her hands with the instruction to look for the person who had owned it. In the first sitting, Mme Morel said :

"I see a man lying at full length, his eyes are closed, as if sleeping, but he does not breathe . . . he is dead. . . . He is not in bed, but on the ground . . . the ground is damp, very damp . . . flat ground . . . uncultivated. . . . There is water not far off . . . a large tree . . . some very big thing quite near . . . something very bushy—a wood."

"Follow that man on the day he went there. Look for the way he went."

"I see a country house. . . . He leaves that . . . he walks. . . . He is ill, his breathing is difficult . . . and his brain is confused. . . . He leaves the path . . . goes into a thicket, a wood . . . he sees much water near by. . . . He falls on the

damp ground . . . then after a little time he breathes no more. It is not far from the house to the place where he is lying. . . . Follow the path from the house towards the water. There are two paths from the house, one goes up and the other down towards the water. The latter is the one to take : he went that way."

"Describe the place where he is lying and give a description so as to find the place."

"I see blocks of stone . . . very large trees . . . and water. . . . I see the body . . . it is lying on the wet ground. . . . He is bald, has a long nose . . . a little white hair above his ears and at the back of his head . . . wearing a long coat . . . soft shirt . . . hands closed. . . . I see one finger which has been hurt . . . very old and wrinkled . . . pendent lips. . . . Forehead much furrowed, very high and open. . . . He is lying on his right side, one leg bent under him."

In spite of further prolonged searching and more detail in a second sitting, he could not be traced. In a third sitting Mme Morel said in answer to the instruction to look for the exact way he took when he left the house :

"He leaves the houses . . . passes by the side of them . . . goes towards the other houses . . . reaches the cross-ways where three roads meet, in front of which there is a house. . . . He passes a barrier . . . hesitates . . . he has an old stick in his hand . . . he taps the ground with it . . . his mind is confused . . . he goes to the right on a descending road . . . hesitates . . . returns to the cross-ways leaning on his stick . . . takes the left-hand road . . . walks on its right side, holding his stick and a check handkerchief . . . passes near a fence and goes into the wood by a path which is barely visible on a level with the road . . . goes there with the intention of hiding. . . .

"From where the body is, the house and the hut are not visible; one must go back to the road to see them. . . . He did not go far into the wood . . . near the place where the ground slopes down somewhat. . . ."

This time a search in the more restricted area was made with complete success, and the surroundings were exactly as described by Mme Morel, as was also the position of the body. In this case the mental contact was ostensibly not with the mind of any living person—but with the discarnate mind of the old man. It is further noteworthy that the neck-wrapper placed in contact with the sensitive had not participated in the events described. Some sensitives, such as Mme Morel, exercise their faculty best under hypnosis; others—the majority—in a more normal conscious state.

Some of the general conclusions of Dr. Osty about the faculty are these :

(a) Each individual who has touched the article may be cognised without any confusion of persons and attributes.

(b) Once the rapport has been established the object has no further part to play and could be destroyed.

(c) The life of the subject can be cognised as it is in the present, irrespective of the time interval since the object was touched by that person.

(d) Objects placed in contact do not apparently communicate their peculiar psychic qualities to each other. [This conclusion is not apparently shared by Miss G. Cummins, who in her book *Unseen Adventures*, p. 57 (Rider & Co., 1951), gives an instance where a letter of hers written under conditions of great emotional stress, and placed with five other letters, gave to an object-reader a feeling "so intense that it seemed to permeate the entire series of objects".]

## WORK OF DR. PAGENSTECHER

Dr. Pagenstecher was a German physician practising in the city of Mexico. One of his patients, Señora Marie Reyes de Z, when in an hypnotic trance, exhibited the faculty to a marked degree. Her faculty was further investigated in 1921 by Dr. W. F. Prince, one of the most experienced American workers in the field of psychical research. An account of this is found in *Proc. American S.P.R.*, Vols. XV and XVI.

One of the most impressive examples of Señora Z's faculty is described below. A friend of Pagenstecher, at that time in Japan, sent him a letter, and also two sealed envelopes. When one of these sealed envelopes was placed in Señora Z's hand she gave a description of the sinking of a large liner, that people were frightened and were putting on life-belts. The language spoken was English. A man was described in some detail, distinguished by a scar over the left eyebrow, who was writing a message. This he tore out of the book, sealed it in a bottle, and threw it into the sea. When the seals of the envelope were broken in the presence of Dr. Pagenstecher and Dr. Prince, a slip of paper apparently torn from a pocket book was disclosed, with the following message (in Spanish) written upon it. "The ship is sinking. Farewell my Louisa; see that my children do not forget me. Your Ramon. Havana. May God care for you and me also. Farewell."

The other sealed envelope contained the facts which were known about it, and a description of the supposed writer. It seemed that the bottle had been picked up on the coast of the Azores and that in Havana lived a lady who identified the writing as her husband's. Her husband had used the assumed name of Ramon B, and had for political reasons left in 1916 without disclosing where he was going. He had been in New York about the time of sailing of the *Lusitania*

on her ill-fated voyage and was presumed lost with the ship. The detailed description, including the scar, corresponded closely with the sensitive's description.

It is of course possible to claim that in this case the contents of the two sealed envelopes were read clairvoyantly. In other cases no such explanation will hold, as where a fragment from a temple in the Roman forum was placed in her hands and the characteristic psychometric ability resulted in a description of the Roman forum.

### THEORY AND SPECULATION

When we ask ourselves precisely how an object can be modified by being touched, so as to permit a sensitive to achieve rapport with the mind of that person, clearly nothing which we know of the ordinary properties of matter can provide us with a clue. The hypothesis of a psychic æther already introduced (see p. 28) here finds one of its most useful applications. The psychic æther modified in the object—which we will for brevity call the ætheric duplicate—can sustain also emotions and thought-images. We may suppose that by touch the characteristics of the ætheric body of the subject are communicated to the ætheric duplicate of the object. Of the nature of this modification, which is characteristic of the mento-emotional nature of a person, it is idle to speculate. Sensitives, however, refer to it as quite distinctive, and making unique identification possible. It is noteworthy that all investigators remark that there is no intermingling of such characteristics in an object; they remain separate, just as many persons might overlay their handwriting on the same piece of paper. One of Dr. Osty's sensitives, M. de Fleuriere, described some of his sensations as follows (*loc. cit.*, p. 170) :

“When I am in proximity to an unknown person, and especially when a light touch places us in contact, I feel

as though I were permeated by an indefinable fluid that radiates from his whole person. . . . Just as one cannot find two faces absolutely alike, I think that I have never found two fluids that have given me exactly the same impression; there are those that seem to me gentle, agreeable, sympathetic, and even pleasant like spring breezes, light and transparent like the blue of the sky; they seem endowed with calming and beneficent power. On the other hand, there are some that are keen, sharp, violent, and repellent, pricking like needle-points, hard and piercing like winter winds; these carry what feels like an antipathetic and discomforting principle. When I desire to fathom the intimate personality of one who projects a fluid into me, there are cases in which the psychic interior of that person appears to me illumined like a large room flooded with light, in which all the contents are to be discerned in order and in strong relief. On the other hand, there are cases in which the fluid is quite different in essence, and when I seek to penetrate interiorly the person to whom it pertains, I have the impression of looking into darkness . . . and things appear but slowly as the eye becomes used to the dimness."

The simplest view of object-reading is that the sensitive discovers the mind of the person who communicated this distinctive quality to the ætheric duplicate of the object, and thereafter derives information from some level of that person's mind or deeper self. It is futile to speculate how such "discovery" is made; we know virtually nothing about the linkage between minds apart from the basic fact that it exists and varies in its degree as between different minds.

One of the interesting observations of Hettinger was that it did not appear essential to the exercise of the faculty by some sensitives that they should themselves touch the object.

A certain form of "concentration" or adjustment of their mind towards the object was sufficient. When we reflect that the mind, while concentrating its activity at a certain point of space and time (described as a physical brain), is not limited in its exercise of  $\psi$ -faculty to this point, Hettinger's observation is not surprising. Moreover, one would venture to predict that the "charging" of the ætheric duplicate of the object with the distinctive personal quality should not depend on physical touch, but could be done by a suitable mental "concentration" on the object. Research to verify these features should be undertaken.

It seems not unreasonable to speculate at this point. It may well be that sacred relics, images, and places of worship and pilgrimage have, on the ætheric level, been saturated by the emotion and veneration of generations of people, and thus become the foci of psychic energies. To these, other persons who are in any degree sensitive may achieve a measure of rapport and make a response. Likewise it may equally be true that certain jewels and relics from Egyptian tombs, sometimes described as ill-omened to their possessors, may have had communicated to them, on the ætheric level, psychic fields of a particularly undesirable kind. We are here approaching a field of "magic" which orthodox science is disposed to dismiss summarily as superstition. We must certainly move with critical caution; our basic need is, however, for careful research, not for either prejudice or dogma. I may perhaps be permitted to draw the reader's attention to a notable example, where merely the touch of a garment placed a patient in momentary rapport with the mind of its possessor and effected an instantaneous healing (Mark v. 25-34).

The subject of psychometry or object-reading is one which will certainly repay all the research and careful examination which can be given to it. Here we are exploring in that



interesting region which holds the clues to an understanding of what we call mind and what we call matter, and of what is the relation between them. On the hypothesis of the existence of a psychic æther which is functionally a bridge between the two levels, clairvoyance might be regarded as operating near the material end of the bridge and object-reading as operating near the mental end of the bridge. The first is concerned principally with form and the second with feeling.

There may be a very close connection between retrocognition (see p. 55) and object-reading, where the object may be in fact a locality. I think we must bear in mind the possibility that there may be a type of object-reading different from that which we have discussed in this chapter. In this type the sensitive's mind is not put *en rapport* with another mind or minds which have been related to that object or locality, but rather with a time series of events which have in some way left their impress on the psychic æther of that locality. Such a suggestion points to an extended view of memory. It may be that a memory-record is not exclusively associated with what we call mind, but is equally associated with what we call matter (through its psychic æther). Mind may be the sole instrument of apprehending memory, but not the sole repository of it.

Sooner or later we shall of course have to abandon this nomenclature of matter, psychic æther, and mind, and recognise that Mind is fundamental, while the other levels are modes or aspects of Mind's functioning.

### *Books for Further Reading*

1. *Supernormal Faculties in Man*: EUGÈNE OSTY (Methuen & Co., 1923; translated by Stanley de Brath).
2. *The Ultra-Perceptive Faculty*: J. HETTINGER (Rider & Co., 1940).

3. *Exploring the Ultra-Perceptive Faculty*: J. HETTINGER (Rider & Co., 1941).
4. *Perceptive Healing*: DR. CONNELL and G. CUMMINS (Rider & Co., 1945).
5. *Unseen Adventures* (Chapter VIII) : GERALDINE CUMMINS (Rider & Co., 1951).

## CHAPTER V

### PSYCHO-KINESIS AND POLTERGEIST PHENOMENA

WE now turn to another aspect of the mind's activities. So far we have considered the sensory side of the mind's function: its ability to interpret the impressions received through the special senses. We have seen that the mind has apparently a faculty of gathering knowledge of events and ideas apart from the use of these special mechanisms of the body. The other side of the mind's activity in relation to the material world is *motor*—i.e. a power of action in the world. The assumption has hitherto been made that such activity is necessarily through an associated body, i.e. through the activity of nerves and muscles. But is this the only possibility? The mind has been shown to have extra-sensory ways of gathering knowledge; may it not also have extra-muscular means of performing actions? It is a question which experiment must answer for us. We may anticipate the results of this chapter to say that the answer is "yes". If we refer to  $\psi$ -faculty, we may then need to distinguish between  $\psi_s$ , the sensory variety, and  $\psi_k$ , the motor variety.<sup>1</sup>

#### WORK OF DR. J. B. RHINE'S SCHOOL

In March 1943 Dr. Rhine and his co-workers at Duke University published in the *Journal of Parapsychology* the firstfruits of ten years' research in the field of telekinesis, or psycho-kinesis (P.K.) as it is now called. The procedure con-

<sup>1</sup> These Greek letters are pronounced psi-gamma and psi-kappa respectively.

sisted of attempting to influence the fall of a die by the mental attitude adopted. Granted that a true unbiased die is used, the chance of any chosen face coming uppermost in a random throw is 1 in 6. If two dice are thrown simultaneously, the sum of the faces may range from 2 to 12. It is easy for the reader to see that there are 36 combinations of the two dice, and of these 15 add up to values of 8 or more, 15 to values of 6 or less, while six combinations are of value 7. Hence by throwing two dice simultaneously we have a chance probability of 5 in 12 that the score will be high (8 or more), and also of 5 in 12 that the score will be low (6 or less). We could try by our attitude of mind to favour a high or, alternatively, a low score. This kind of experiment, like those with cards, can be treated statistically, allowing a statement to be made as to the chance likelihood of any deviation taking place from the expected number of throws.

One of the most obvious criticisms which may be made of these experiments is that an absolutely true die probably does not exist, and that a small bias might easily be revealed in a large number of throws. This objection was met by always making two series of throws of approximately equal numbers; in one series a high score would be the aim, in the other a low score would be the aim. Obviously, a supposed bias could not benefit both these series, except in the event of a peculiarity which would create a deficiency of sevens.

In the course of experimental work many variations were tried. Dice were placed on a corrugated inclined surface and allowed to roll down under gravity. They were also placed in an electrically rotated cage with flat ends. The manner of throwing did not, however, appear significant. Variations such as the number of dice thrown at one time, the size, shape, and material of the dice were also made. A throw of twenty-four dice was standardised as a "run", whether this was twenty-four separate dice, twelve twos, eight threes, etc.

One of the most characteristic and significant effects noticed was that a first run usually gave a marked score above chance, a second run would give a smaller P.K. effect, a third run one smaller still, and so on. This "decline" effect was characteristic of E.S.P. also (see p. 21) Interest and novelty appear to be important stimuli, and to maintain a P.K. effect after two or three runs some change or variation of conditions is desirable. The existence of this decline effect which results in scoring practically at the chance level after a few runs is the strongest evidence against bias in the dice as an explanation of the effects.

Experiments were made throwing different numbers of dice at one time, ranging through 1, 2, 6, 12, 24, 48 to 96. If the force which operated to secure above-chance scoring was physical in its nature, one would expect that the larger the mass to be moved the less marked would be the effect. There is no indication of any such relationship. On the contrary, Rhine and his co-workers found that in experimenting with the throwing of larger and larger numbers of dice, the results improved each time. All that can probably be inferred from this is that novelty and interest are important determinants. Tests with dice of different volume, and of the same volume but of different material, showed no correlation of P.K. with these factors. Where, however, an experimenter appeared to have a mental attitude of preference for one kind of dice, this favoured the effect.

In experiments designed to discover any correlation between P.K. and the distance between the dice and the experimenter, no significant change was observed up to 25 feet. It was noticed, however, that where the mental attitude favoured either proximity or distance, the P.K. effect followed the direction of preference.

D. J. West, in a critical survey of the American P.K. research (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XLVII, p. 281), has stated that

in his opinion "the case for P.K. does not seem to be challengeable; it is probably even more clear-cut and conclusive than the case for E.S.P. itself". We have not so far offered the reader any experimental data on which to form a judgment himself; chiefly because it is in the whole mass of accumulated facts that the strength of the case lies.

Without entering into mathematical considerations very far, we may take as an imaginary experiment 1,200 throws of a die for which the probability of any chosen face turning up is 1 in 6 or 200 times. We have set out in the table how

<i>Deviation Upwards</i>	<i>Chance</i>
+ 10	1 in 4.3
+ 20	1 in 15.3
+ 30	1 in 89.3
+ 40	1 in 909

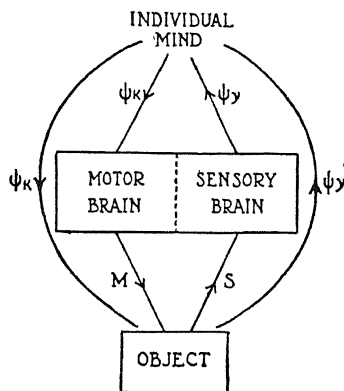
likely it is that an upward deviation from this number would occur on a chance basis. Thus the chance that in 1,200 throws 230 or more appearances of a particular face will occur is 1 in 89. Below are two actual experiments where a pair of dice were thrown.

	<i>Number of Throws</i>	<i>Devi- ation</i>	<i>Crit. Ratio</i>	<i>Odds</i>
Aim High :	5,904	290	7.65	Enormous
Aim Low :	5,220	-140	3.92	1 in 25,000

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PSYCHO-KINESIS

J. B. Rhine has drawn attention to the very marked parallels which exist between E.S.P. and P.K. They are influenced by the same factors. Whether we are considering the factor of distance, the actions of drugs on the experi-

menter, the decline effects, the importance of interest and novelty, the inhibitory effect of distractions and so on—we find a notable similarity. It looks as though these two aspects of the mind's faculty are inter-linked as the notation  $\psi_\gamma$  (E.S.P.) and  $\psi_\kappa$  (P.K.) remind us. Indeed, it would seem reasonable to suppose that far from being para-normal,  $\psi$ -faculty may be of the essential nature of the mind's functioning. We choose to call the familiar the "normal", and this may be where  $\psi$ -faculty is wholly operative through the



senses or through the muscles. We choose to call the less familiar activity of  $\psi$ -faculty—where it is not mediated through the brain of the observer—"para-normal". There may be in essence only one faculty with two complementary aspects, sensory and motor. Provided the mind can be disengaged from its close focusing on the material world, through the brain, we can then become aware of the mind's more extended powers.

If we want to find a place in the attached diagram for our psychic æther, it may be regarded as the medium or vehicle of activity of the  $\psi_\gamma$  and  $\psi_\kappa$ , just as the now-discarded æther

of the physicists was once pictured as a vehicle for electromagnetic waves. Rhine has suggested that P.K. really implies E.S.P. as a necessity, using the argument that para-normal knowledge of the orientation of the die is essential to the effective application of P.K., in order to score above chance on a particular face. One might almost visualise the ætheric duplicates of a group of dice being orientated by P.K., much as a transient magnetic field would orientate a group of magnets. In any deeper understanding of these things I am confident, however, that we shall have to abandon models and mechanism, just as physicists have found it necessary to do this in their more profound studies of the atom. Perhaps  $\psi_v$  represents a fundamental relationship of mental rapport between a so-called individual mind and the sustained thoughts of a Divine or cosmic mind. Perhaps  $\psi_k$  represents our own puny power of modifying and affecting locally the cosmic mental field. All sense-data are created and sustained by Divine Imagining. All natural laws are ideas created and sustained in this cosmic mental field. The laws of chance are an example. When we introduce our own imagining we can temporarily and locally modify the mental field. Another and different form of doing this will be considered in the next chapter dealing with apparitions.

When we were considering E.S.P. we remarked that the card experiments revealed only the faculty on the fringe of its development, not in its fuller manifestation as some of the spontaneous cases revealed it. The same remarks apply to P.K. in the dice experiments. The more striking forms of it are found among the phenomena of physical mediumship, where curtains are blown about, objects levitated, and various manifestations of powerful physical forces have been exhibited.



## PRONOUNCED FORMS OF PSYCHO-KINESIS

When in 1870 Sir William Crookes, O.M., F.R.S., published his researches in this field with the aid of the medium D. D. Home, he met with the incredulity and ridicule of the scientific world. Crookes was a man of unquestionable integrity and outstanding distinction, being elected President of the Royal Society in 1913. The record of his experiments<sup>1</sup> is worthy of study, not only for the sake of the evidence provided, but as an account of the bitter opposition which he had to meet in presenting experimental data which would not fit into the orthodox scientific thought-pattern of the time. Crookes said in his defence: "Not until I had witnessed these facts some half-dozen times, and scrutinised them with all the critical acumen I possess, did I become convinced of their objective reality." He continued: "Remember, I hazard no hypothesis or theory whatever; I merely vouch for certain facts, my only object being—the truth. Doubt, but do not deny; point out, by the severest criticism what are considered fallacies in my experimental tests, and suggest more conclusive trials; but do not let us hastily call our senses lying witnesses merely because they testify against preconceptions."

In the presence of D. D. Home, Crookes witnessed an 8-lb. weight on a weighing machine in three successive trials increase its reading to 36 lb., 48 lb., and 46 lb. respectively "under strict scrutiny". On a second occasion, in the presence of other observers, three trials showed the 8-lb. weight reading 23 lb., 43 lb., and 27 lb., where Crookes had complete control of the experiment and took every precaution to exclude trickery.

He built an apparatus consisting of a simple lever, a

<sup>1</sup> *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*: W. CROOKES (1953; Psychic Book Club, 48 Old Bailey, E.C.4).

spring-balance, and an automatic recorder of the balance readings, and was able to record and measure the force which Home could exert when his hands were not in contact with the apparatus or when they dipped into a basin of water placed on the lever under conditions where mechanical force was precluded. Crookes said that the force which Home could exert varied enormously from hour to hour; it might be inappreciable for an hour or more, and then suddenly become very strong. Crookes also remarked that while the force was capable of acting at a distance of 2 or 3 feet away from Home, it was always strongest close to him. This characteristic variation with distance and the fact that the force appeared to emanate from the hands suggests at least the possibility that this kind of force may not be the same as that involved in Rhine's P.K. experiments.

Crookes records numerous examples of heavy objects being moved at some distance from the medium. He refers to five occasions on which he had seen a heavy dining-room table rise between a few inches and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet from the floor under special circumstances which rendered trickery impossible.

Crookes mentions that there were at least a hundred recorded instances of the levitation of D. D. Home, and that he witnessed three of them. "On three separate occasions I have seen him raised completely from the floor of the room. Once sitting in an easy chair, once kneeling on his chair, and once standing up. On each occasion I had full opportunity of watching the occurrence as it was taking place." He refers to detailed accounts which he had heard from the Earl of Dunraven, Lord Lindsay, and Captain C. Wynne of their own observation of levitation phenomena with Home. Crookes also states that in his own house, where trickery or any sort of fraudulent preparation were quite out of the question, he had witnessed an accordion play in his own

hand while he held it with the keys downwards, and he had seen and heard the same accordion float about the room playing all the time. He claims to have seen a water-bottle and tumbler rise from the table, a coral necklace rise on end, and a fan move about and fan the company.

The same kind of things have been recorded by trustworthy observers in the presence of many famous mediums.<sup>1</sup> I shall therefore refer here only to one other outstanding example—that of Anna Rasmussen. Professor Winther of Copenhagen studied this medium for fifteen years, and published the details of his studies (*Journ. American S.P.R.*, January–May 1928). In Winther's laboratory, on a stable base, there was supported a glass chamber within which were suspended a number of pendula of different lengths and with different bobs. In the presence of this medium the pendula, or any selected, could be made to swing or stop or change their direction as requested, with no possibility of mechanical interference. These phenomena were observed in broad daylight on many occasions.

These are strange things, and many readers will feel bewildered. They are not everyday occurrences, and few of us will ever have the opportunity of investigating them at first hand. They are, of course, no stranger than many of the extra-sensory phenomena; but we tend to think we know what *ought* to happen in the physical world. We have built up for ourselves preconceptions, and it is the weight of these against which psychical research has to contend. When a sufficient number of observations have been made by responsible persons under conditions where fraud can be ruled out, I think we must be prepared to jettison our preconceptions and seek for a wider world-view within which

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Eusapia Palladino. See *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXIII, 1909; or *Rudi Schneider: A Scientific Examination of his Mediumship*: HARRY PRICE (1930).

these things can find an intelligible place. Innumerable questions arise concerning phenomena such as we have described. What is the source of the energy which produces these effects? Does the physical law of the Conservation of Energy and Matter hold? Are we to conceive of the medium's subconscious mind as the directive agency? It is easier to ask these questions than to find even tentative answers. We shall leave them for the present and look at another group of similar phenomena.

### POLTERGEIST EFFECTS

The German word poltergeist has passed into English usage, and has the meaning of "a boisterous noisy spirit". We shall use the term without necessarily accepting this implied theory of the phenomena. Accounts of happenings described as "poltergeist" have been current through the centuries, and the reader who desires to form an impression of the accumulated records should read some book devoted exclusively to the subject. They all run remarkably true to a general type: unexplained noises in empty rooms and corridors, sounds such as of furniture being dragged about, sounds of blows or raps upon bedposts, or even from the interior of tree trunks, sounds as of breaking china or glass—where there is no apparent physical cause. In addition to acoustical effects there are sensational kinetic effects, in which objects of all kinds may fly about. Books fly off shelves, household utensils are projected through space or dance about on the floor and are sometimes broken, beds are overturned, etc. Occasionally, unusual thermal effects have been recorded: foci of a sustained fall of temperature or of a sustained rise of temperature. From the standpoint of energy production, acoustical effects, while impressive to the auditory sense, involve comparatively little energy. On

the other hand, thermal effects are impressive in relation to the magnitude of the energy involved.

I shall give an abbreviated account of one case only, selected because it was witnessed personally by Sir William Barrett, Professor of Physics in Dublin.

*The Derrygonnelly Case* (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXV, p. 390, 1911):

"The cottage in which these phenomena were observed was an isolated farmhouse occupied by a grey-headed farmer who had recently lost his wife, and a family of four girls and one boy. The youngest was about ten years of age, and the eldest, Maggie, round whom the disturbances centred, was about twenty. The noises generally began after they had retired and often continued all through the night. Rats of course were first suspected, but when objects began to move without any visible cause, stones to fall, candles and boots repeatedly thrown out of the house, the rat theory was abandoned and a general terror took possession of the family. Several neighbours urged them to send for the priest, but they were Methodists, and their class leader advised them to lay an open Bible on the bed. This they did in the name of God, putting a big stone on the top of the volume; but the stone was lifted off by an unseen hand and the Bible placed on top of it. After that, 'it', as the farmer called the unseen cause, moved the Bible out of the room and tore seventeen pages right across. Sir William Barrett's own observations were as follows: 'After the children, except the boy, had gone to bed, Maggie lay down on the bed without undressing so that her hands and feet could be observed. The rest of us sat round the kitchen fire, when faint raps, rapidly increasing in loudness, were heard, coming apparently from the walls, the ceiling and various parts of

the inner room, the door of which was open. On entering the bedroom with a light the noises at first ceased, but recommenced when I put the light on the window-sill in the kitchen. I had the boy and his father by my side, and asked Mr. Plunkett to look round the house outside. Standing in the doorway leading to the bedroom the noises recommenced, the light was gradually brought nearer, and after much patience I was able to bring the light into the bedroom whilst the disturbances were still loudly going on. At last I was able to go up to the side of the bed with the lighted candle in my hand, and closely observed each of the occupants lying on the bed. The younger children were asleep, and Maggie was motionless; nevertheless, knocks were going on everywhere around; on the chairs, the bedstead, the walls, and ceiling. The closest scrutiny failed to detect any movement on the part of those present that could account for the noises, which were accompanied by a scratching or tearing sound. Suddenly a large pebble fell in my presence on to the bed; no one had moved to dislodge it even if it had been placed for the purpose. When I replaced the candle on the window-sill in the kitchen, the knocks became still louder, like those made by a heavy carpenter's hammer driving nails into flooring.'

"On two successive evenings following this, Sir William Barrett with Rev. Maxwell Chase, Mr. Close, and Mr. Plunkett again heard these manifestations. Barrett said that the entity would, at request, respond by the correct number of raps to a number of which he thought. Four times, with his hands in his overcoat pocket, he asked for the number of fingers which he had extended—and this was indicated correctly by the raps. On the second of these occasions, the farmer begged the visitors not to leave without ridding them of the poltergeist. The clerical mem-

ber of the party therefore conducted a short service. Sir William says, "The noises were at first so great we could hardly hear what was read, then as the solemn words of prayer were uttered they subsided, and when the Lord's Prayer was joined in by us all, a profound stillness fell on the whole cottage. The farmer rose from his knees with tears streaming from his eyes, gratefully clasped our hands, and we left for our long midnight drive back to Enniskillen. I am afraid this does not sound a very scientific account, but it is a veracious one.' There were apparently no further disturbances from that night onwards."

Those who care to read the interesting accounts of the Borley Rectory haunting will find abundant records of poltergeist phenomena. Harry Price was himself a witness of the end of the flight of a red glass candlestick down the well of a staircase, the candlestick having been seen a short time before on the mantelpiece of an upstairs room. Such a flight must have involved turns round two corners. The significance of this observation is that it was obviously a case of guided flight rather than free flight in a parabolic trajectory. There is some kind of intelligence behind the manifestations specifically controlling them. It is not merely a case of the explosive release of an initial amount of energy. This conclusion is supported by Barrett's observation of an apparent telepathic rapport between the entity and himself. Barrett also expresses the view that poltergeist phenomena "can be inhibited by suggestion acting either upon the human 'radiant point' or upon the unseen agency, or upon both".

One of the most striking features of the poltergeist records is that in a large majority of cases a young person seems to be the unconscious agent of the effects. In most of these cases it is a girl rather than a boy who is responsible.

There seems considerable evidence that physiological activity, and more particularly that of sexual change, is in some of these cases closely linked up with the phenomena (*vide* Harry Price: *Poltergeist over England*, Chapter XXX). It cannot be overlooked that even at Borley Rectory, where the phenomena continued over many years and cannot be associated with any one person alone, Mrs. Foyster was a young woman, and Price informs us that except for interludes there had been young girls always living there.

One of the most instructive cases of poltergeist phenomena is that of Jean Baptiste Vianney, the famous Curé d'Ars, between 1786-1859. Here we find the poltergeist phenomena, associated also with extra-sensory perception, being produced and maintained by him for over thirty years. The significant features—at least they are distinctive and unusual—would seem to be (a) his physical austerities and (b) his mental attitudes. As to the first, he engaged rigorously in ascetic practices, such as fasting, self-scourging, and going without sleep. As to the second—apart from the influence of the body on the mind—he gave himself to intense supplicatory prayer for his sinful “flock”, and considered that in some way through his penance and suffering he was expiating their guilt. Gerald Heard, commenting on the *curé's* energy output, remarks that “the source of the leakage must be looked for in what we may call the psycho-physical belt of the mind-body”. With this I agree. What we have for convenience called the ætheric body—the bridge between the physical on the one hand and the lower-mind on the other—was subjected by him to enormous stress from both sides. It is in this “ætheric” region—and in this body or vehicle—that we must look for the keys to all poltergeist phenomena.

We do not know enough to do more than speculate, and



any theories put forward must be very tentative indeed. I think we should recognise that on each significant level, whether physical, ætheric, or mental, we have types of energy characteristic of these world-levels. There is, for example, the testimony of clairvoyants to the existence of certain energy circulations in the ætheric body of Man (*vide* Payne and Bendit : *The Psychic Sense*, p. 79. Faber & Faber, 1943). This has of course found no recognition yet by orthodox physiology. There can be no doubt, I think, from the evidence of object-reading, of the existence in the psychic æther associated with objects of emotional energy and thought-characteristics. I extend this idea a little, and postulate that associated with the psychic æther in certain places and in certain persons (like the Curé d'Ars) there have been built up intense reservoirs of energy which seek to find release. According to their nature and provided a person of the right type of ætheric body is available, these reservoirs of energy can be dissipated. The phenomena may be sensory in some cases, giving rise to visual apparitions (ghosts), or auditory in other cases, or the phenomena may be kinetic, as when material objects are hurled about. We have then what is effectively a transmutation of energy from one mode which we may broadly call psychical to another which we describe as physical. Such transmutation is not, I venture to think, commonplace or easily effected; if it were, we should probably never have had a principle of conservation of energy in physics.

It may be that when the ætheric vehicle is of a certain quality or in a state of instability and change (as in adolescence), the possibilities of this transmutation are present with startling results.

#### SOME SPECULATIONS

It is perhaps unwise to speculate in a field where so little is known. It is, however, easy and tempting to do so, and

perhaps some justification may be found in the possibility that enquiry and research, which are so urgently needed, will be stimulated.

I have avoided so far expressing any views about the nature of the poltergeist. Those who would tentatively accept the release of a dammed-up reservoir of energy in the psychic æther as the proximate cause of poltergeist phenomena, may wish me to indicate the origin of such a reservoir. In the case of the Curé d'Ars, he himself, by his practices, created and constantly replenished it. In the case of many others—where the phenomena appear to be associated with a person rather than with a place—they may be *unconsciously* the creators and sustainers of the reservoir of energy. Where the phenomena appear linked with a place or locality, we may regard it as the legacy of intense stress or emotion in which persons who once lived there were concerned. Clearly, however, it is only one further step to the spiritistic hypothesis, if it be assumed that the discarnate mind which once created this emotional reservoir is still interested in maintaining it. Sir William Barrett indeed says: "Possibly these poltergeist phenomena may be due to some of these mischievous or rudimentary intelligences in the unseen: I do not know why we should imagine there are no fools or naughty children in the spiritual world; possibly they are as numerous there as here." It may be so! When little boys throw stones into a pool, we do not seek for the meaning or purpose behind their activity; it is sufficient to assume that it affords them pleasure—and perhaps even greater pleasure if they find it irritates grown-ups!

In an interesting paper by Dr. John Layard (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XLVII, p. 237; 1945), which created much controversy, two cases are described of a psychological kind in which dramatic poltergeist effects were regarded as associated with the process of mental healing. If such be true

we have here an energy transmutation in which mental stress disappears and kinetic energy is manifested.

The apparently controlled lifting of heavy objects (to which Crookes refers) suggests the possibility that such forces may have been used in the ancient world to effect engineering feats at which we wonder today. Huge tri-lithons like those of Stonehenge, or the raising into position of stones weighing up to 1,200 tons in the ancient temple of Baalbek, are difficult to account for with the mechanical resources of that time. No one has any knowledge of the limits to which psycho-kinetic forces can reach. Those who are interested in the literature of the great religions will find many examples of recorded "miracles" in which such forces may have been operative. The destruction of the walls of Jericho (Joshua vi.) described in the Old Testament, and the stilling of a storm (Mark iv. 37-41) in the New Testament, may perhaps be examples. St. Matthew describes very impressive psycho-kinetic phenomena following the crucifixion (xxvii. 50-4).

### *Books for Further Reading*

1. *The Reach of the Mind*: J. B. RHINE (Faber & Faber, 1948).
2. *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*: WM. CROOKES (Psychic Book Club, London, 1953).
3. *Poltergeist over England*: HARRY PRICE (Country Life Ltd., 1945).

## CHAPTER VI

### MATERIALISATION PHENOMENA

**P**ARA-NORMAL phenomena may be divided into two broad groups, the subjective or extra-sensory, and the objective or motor phenomena. Chapters II, III, and IV dealt with the first group, while Chapter V and the present one deal with the latter group. To the plain man the phenomena of materialisation are perhaps the most extraordinary of all. They consist in the appearance of some kind of material substance, which has apparently exuded from the person of a medium. The substance, usually called ectoplasm, is capable of being moulded into forms which carry out intelligent movements.

These phenomena are comparatively rare, but their occurrence is attested by such able scientific investigators as Dr. Schrenck-Notzing, Dr. Osty, Dr. Gustave Geley, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes, Sir William Barrett, M. Camille Flammarion, Professors Charles Richet and Driesch. These men were all fully aware of the possibilities of fraud, and took steps to prevent it. None of these men were easy to convince, none of them had anything to gain by stating their conviction of the existence of these things. They did so because they were honest men and felt in honour bound to express their findings. It is quite true that a good deal of fraud has been associated with the subject of physical mediumship, and this has tended to make responsible people view the whole field with mistrust. If, however, only 5 per cent. of the phenomena were genuine we should, in the scientific tradition, be in honour bound to investigate them fully, and determine their significance for our world-view.

Speaking of fraud, I think it is important to distinguish between what we may call conscious fraud and unconscious fraud. As for the first of these, while some of it has been unscrupulous trickery for monetary gain, this has seldom if ever deceived competent investigators. Some conscious fraud has arisen from vanity—as in the case of the Neapolitan medium Eusapia Palladino. She had demonstrated beyond question her ability to create genuine phenomena, but these were dependent on a power which she could not control or command. When, however, the power was weak or not present, she was undoubtedly capable of resorting to trickery if given the chance to do so. Dr. Hereward Carrington has said of her phenomena: "Every group of scientific men that ever experimented with Eusapia knew very well that she would defraud them if the chance were given her to do so."

Eusapia's phenomena at their best were so extraordinary, that Richet says: "All the men of science, without exception, who experimented with her were in the end convinced that she produced genuine phenomena."

As for unconscious fraud, we must remember that when a medium is in trance we should not necessarily expect the same standard of conduct as would be anticipated in the normal state. Indeed, there is much evidence to suggest that in a trance a medium is sometimes very suggestible, and that if there are suspicions of fraud in the minds of investigators, they may be communicated to deeper levels of the medium's mind and productive of this very thing. We shall now look at some of the evidence of materialisation phenomena.

#### OSTY'S EXPERIMENTS WITH RUDI SCHNEIDER

In 1932, in his own laboratory in Paris, Dr. Osty made experiments to test the psycho-kinetic power of the Austrian medium Rudi Schneider. Lord Rayleigh, a distinguished physicist, commented favourably upon this work (*Proc.*

*S.P.R.*, Vol. XLV, pp. 12-16, 1938). The object to be moved was protected by an infra-red beam of light falling on a photo-electric cell, so that if this beam was obscured from any cause a bell would ring. The bell sometimes rang for half a minute or more, and when this happened flashlight photographs showed the medium fully controlled and revealed nothing visible in the path of the beam. Whatever was causing the bell to ring had appreciable infra-red absorption, but it could be disintegrated by lateral illumination of the beam with visible light. In later experiments the bell was replaced by a quick-period galvanometer and a recording drum, so that the observation of the infra-red beam could be studied. It was observed that the process of obscuration had a rhythmic character which coincided with the rhythm of breathing of the entranced medium. This observation, which was carefully checked, suggests that the production of the "ectoplasm" was in some way linked with respiration. It is a curious observation, and one which will have to be accounted for when we know more of the relations between the physical and ætheric bodies.

#### RICHET'S AND GELEY'S EXPERIMENTS WITH KLUSKI

Frank Kluski was a Polish medium—non-professional—and Professor Richet and Dr. Geley made a joint investigation of his powers. In his presence while entranced, the so-called ectoplasm issuing from his body was moulded into forms, such as hands and feet, and these would carry out intelligent movements. The investigators provided in the séance room a bath of molten paraffin wax, and the idea was that if an ectoplasmic form would dip itself into the wax a glove of wax could be obtained which would remain as permanent evidence. Richet's account is as follows :

"Geley and I took the precaution of introducing, unknown to any other person, a small quantity of cholesterol

into the bath of melted paraffin wax placed before the medium during the séance. This substance is soluble in paraffin wax without discolouring it, but on adding sulphuric acid it takes a deep violet-red tint; so that we could be absolutely certain that any moulds formed should be obtained from paraffin provided by ourselves. . . . During the seance the medium's hands were held firmly by Geley and myself on the right and left so that he could not liberate either hand. The first mould obtained was of a child's hand, then a second of both hands (right and left), and a third of a child's foot. The creases in the skin and the veins were visible on the plaster casts made from the moulds.

"By reason of the narrowness of the wrists, these moulds could not have been made from living hands; for the whole hand would have had to be withdrawn through the narrow opening at the wrist. Professional modellers secure their results by threads attached to the hand which are pulled through the plaster. In the moulds here considered there was nothing of the sort, they were produced by a materialisation followed by a de-materialisation."—*Thirty Years of Psychical Research* (William Collins & Sons, 1923).

#### THE PHENOMENA OF W. STANTON MOSES

In early numbers of the *Proc. S.P.R.* (Vols. IX and XI), the reader will find a selection of records edited by F. W. H. Myers which cover phenomena of great variety and of an extraordinary character. W. Stanton Moses was born in Lincolnshire in 1839 and died in 1892. He was an Oxford graduate, a curate in the Church of England, and a man of exemplary character. Myers wrote of him: "More important than the precise degree of attractiveness or of spiritual refinement in Mr Moses' personal demeanour are the fundamental questions of sanity and probity. On these points

neither I myself, nor, so far as I know, any person acquainted with Mr. Moses have ever entertained any doubt." Mr. C. C. Massey, Barrister-at-Law, wrote: "However perplexed for an explanation, the crassest prejudice has recoiled from ever suggesting a doubt of the truth and honesty of Stainton Moses." The chief, and often only witnesses of the phenomena were Moses' close friends Dr. and Mrs. S. T. Speer and Mr. F. W. Percival (Barrister-at-Law and Examiner in the Education Department). Dr. Speer was a distinguished physician, having worked in the medical schools of London, Edinburgh, Paris, and Montpelier, and had held various hospital positions. His cast of mind was thoroughly scientific and his disposition rather towards materialism than towards a religious outlook. Of Mrs. Speer, Myers wrote: "I regard her as an excellent witness."

The physical phenomena covered a period of about eight years, and for many of the sittings there were independent contemporary records by Mrs. Speer and sometimes Dr. Speer or Mr. Percival. Myers had the opportunity of comparing and studying all these, and wrote: "I at least can see no *via media* which can possibly be taken. The permanent fraud of the whole group or the substantial accuracy of all the records are the only hypotheses which seem to me capable of covering the facts. . . . My only personal contribution to the data before us lies in my somewhat confident impression that my friends whom I am thus frankly discussing are and were in the habit of speaking the truth."

From the hundreds of records, a summary of the variety of para-normal phenomena may be made. Where quotation marks are used, the words are of one of the observers.

(1) A variety of raps "on door, sideboard, and walls all removed some distance from the table at which we sat. These raps could not possibly have been produced by any human agency; of that I satisfied myself in every conceivable way."



(2) Numerous lights "usually like small illuminated globes which shone brightly and steadily, often moved rapidly about the room and were visible to *all* the sitters. Unlike an ordinary lamp, they never threw any radiance around them."

(3) Scents of various kinds were obtained. "Sometimes breezes heavy with perfume swept round the circle, at other times quantities of liquid musk, etc., would be poured on the hands of the sitters and, by request, on our handkerchiefs. At the close of a séance scent was often found to be oozing out of the medium's head."

(4) Musical sounds of great variety, intensity, and quality where no musical instrument was present in the room.

(5) Writing on a sheet of paper—answers to questions or messages—a small piece of lead or a pencil being provided.

(6) Movements of heavy bodies. "The dining-table . . . was made of solid Honduras mahogany, but at times it was moved with much greater ease than the combined efforts of all the sitters could accomplish."

(7) The passage of matter through matter: sometimes called the phenomenon of "apports". "Photographs, picture-frames, books, and other objects were frequently so brought both from rooms on the same floor and from those above as well. How they came through the closed doors I cannot say, except by some process of dematerialisation; but come they certainly did, apparently none the worse for that process."

These are of course bewildering phenomena, and the reader may well read of them with incredulity. If the friends of Stainton Moses were the only responsible group to record them, one would probably regard the probability of self-deception as greater than the probability of the events. They are, however, the kind of events recorded by other careful observers with several "physical" mediums. The reader who wants to be satisfied about the appearance of such

phenomena under conditions of rigorous control may read some of the books by authorities such as Richet, Schrenck-Notzing, and Price, mentioned at the end of this chapter.

#### PHENOMENA OF NIKOLAEFF

In *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XLVII, p. 261, an account is given of phenomena typical of most physical mediums. The investigating committee of six members signed the report and testify to phenomena such as these (a self-luminous hand and arm had been materialised) :

“The luminous hand began soon to fly in the air and to strike on the lamp glass cover and the counter shade with such violence that it seemed as if these ought to fly into splinters. A kind of savage bell-ringing was taking place. Under the eyes of all those present the luminous vapour-like hand suddenly tore off the lamp the silken shade and tossed it through the opening in the curtain with such violence towards Dr. Lestchinsky that the latter involuntarily drew aside. After the silken lampshade had thus flown out, the raps on the lamp grew weaker and a second luminous hand appeared on the medium’s left. Both hands, still not quite materialised, formed then a something like two luminous rays coming out of the sides of the medium’s body and separated from it by small dark spaces. It seemed as if the medium, besides his two hands, was now endowed with two other luminous hands moving in the air . . . they often flew away from the medium and rapped violently upon the medium’s arm-chair or upon its legs or upon the sofa. . . . At times the hands would fly from the medium still farther and blows were then heard simultaneously on the ceiling, the floor, the walls, the dining-table, the sideboard. . . . After which the right luminous arm, having stretched itself towards the heavy

sofa which stood in a corner nearby, began to displace it towards those present with a strength and adroitness hardly accessible to an ordinary man. . . .”

If the reader desires further evidence of the same extraordinary kind, where not merely arms but a complete, apparently solid living materialised figure appeared on several occasions, he may consult Sir William Crookes’ book *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle adds his testimony to that of Crookes about the appearance of Katie King in the presence of the medium Florence Cook. A similar record has been left by Harry Price of the appearance of a little girl Rosalie, at a séance under conditions which he had himself controlled in advance. Price was an experienced investigator and a competent conjurer, and the detail of his account is remarkable and impressive. These figures were touched, seen, and heard, and were indistinguishable by the senses of the observers from living normal human beings of flesh and blood.

Such records have probably strained the credulity of readers of this volume to the limit. What are we to make of them?

#### DISCUSSION OF THE FACTS

It seems to me, in the first place, that we have to make up our minds whether these and other records are factual. When we look at the names, the distinguished records, and the competence of the men who, after many years of study of these things, testified to what their own senses had observed, we cannot, I think, do other than regard them as facts. These were men not easily duped : they required unquestionable evidence under their own conditions. Above all, they had nothing to gain by their testimony, except the

approval by their consciences of an attitude of courageous honesty. In the second place, there seems to be no half-way house in which we can rest. If one single indubitable materialisation—even of a little finger—is admitted, there is no rational point at which we can stop and say “impossible”.

What do the observations of “materialisation” amount to? This surely : that our senses record data, i.e. visual data of shape and colour and movement, tactile data of resistance to touch, etc., similar to commonplace everyday sense-data, but under conditions where we should not expect to find them. When we ask ourselves what is the status of tables and rocks and trees and living bodies, which we interpret as a world outside ourselves, we realise when we think deeply about it that this is our mind’s interpretation of electrical excitement in various parts of our cerebral cortex. If we ask ourselves why we interpret the electrical excitement in this strange way, it must surely be because the nature of our minds is akin to, and in some rapport with, a Divine Mind which sustains these appearances—these other electrical systems—the rocks and trees and bodies. It creates and sustains these things, and indeed the whole phenomenal world of sense-data owes its origin, preservation, and change to this all-embracing mental field. Embedded within it are these finite minds of ours, foci of limited observation and activity, and perhaps it is possible and reasonable to see in so-called materialisation phenomena a feeble, finite, and highly localised mimicry of the world-creation of sense-data. The “normal” world displays qualities of permanence which our finite localised imitations are far from realising. This is quite obvious, but may not the nature of the process be the same? There is a difference between moving a die and moving a mountain, between the para-normal billowing of a curtain

and the sustained trade winds, between a materialised hand which lasts five minutes and a physical body which is useful for seventy years, but perhaps the difference is one of degree in both space and time.

If we try to visualise in a little more detail how materialisation operates, I think we must look at the normal phenomenon of growth in Nature. If we ask such questions as : Why does a beech-tree produce only beech leaves and not serrated leaves like the oak or a fan of leaves like the horse-chestnut? Why does a flower grow to its particular pattern and shape, and no other? Why does the repair of a wound follow the pattern of the original form and not create an anatomical monstrosity? We must visualise the existence of a force-field, a sort of three-dimensional pattern to which what we loosely call "matter" must conform. The medium in which this idea-pattern is sustained is our old friend the psychic æther. Sense-data clothe this idea pattern in the psychic æther as flesh clothes the skeleton. We know nothing, absolutely nothing of the process. All we can say is that it seems possible—even probable—that in the materialisation phenomena we have an activity of our finite individual minds which is of the same nature. If so, then the study of the conditions of this creative and artistic activity in ourselves—this so-called para-normal activity—should offer us basic clues to the nature of the physical world, and especially to the nature of living things and the laws of growth.

### *Books for Further Reading*

1. *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*: PROF. C. RICHTER (William Collins & Co., 1923).
2. *Phenomena of Materialisation*: SCHRENCK-NOTZING (Dutton & Co., 1920).

3. *Clairvoyance and Materialisation*: G. GELEY (Fisher Unwin & Co., 1927).
4. *Rudi Schneider: A Scientific Examination of his Mediumship*: HARRY PRICE (Methuen & Co., 1930).
5. *Fifty Years of Psychical Research*: HARRY PRICE (Longmans Green & Co., 1939).

## CHAPTER VII

### APPARITIONS AND HAUNTINGS

THERE has been made a number of collections of apparitions or phantasms. One of the earliest of these was *Phantasms of the Living* by Gurney, Myers and Podmore in 1896. Mrs. Henry Sidgwick published a collection (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXIII, 1923) covering the period 1886-1920. Sir Ernest Bennett published fifty new cases in 1939 in a book called *Apparitions and Haunted Houses*. The most important single investigation ever made was that of a committee of the S.P.R., who published their findings in 1894 (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. X). It is a document of about 400 pages, and is a summary and analysis of the results of a questionnaire to which 17,000 answers were received. The question was—"Have you ever, when believing yourself to be completely awake, had a vivid impression of seeing, or being touched by a living being or inanimate object, or of hearing a voice; which impression, so far as you could discover, was not due to any external physical cause." Of the total replies about 9.9 per cent. answered "yes". Women appeared to be rather more perceptible than men, since 7.8 per cent. of the men and 12 per cent. of the women answered "yes". Of the affirmative answers about 32 per cent. were apparitions of living persons, 14 per cent. of dead persons and 33 per cent. of unrecognised persons. The remaining 21 per cent. were not of persons, or were incompletely developed. As regards the nature of the hallucination: 55 per cent. were exclusively visual, 25 per cent. purely auditory, 7 per cent. purely tactile, and the balance

were cases in which two or more of these senses were simultaneously involved.

The most outstanding contribution made so far to the theoretical aspect of the subject is that of G. N. M. Tyrrell, whose book, *Apparitions*, first published in 1943, marks a landmark in the study of the subject. In the four sections which follow are presented a few illustrative examples that cover the facts which we shall then proceed to discuss.

#### EXPERIMENTAL APPARITIONS

It may be a matter of surprise to the reader that there are records of apparitions experimentally produced. Some examples are given below.

*Case of Miss Danvers and Mrs. Fleetwood (Proc. S.P.R., Vol. X, p. 418):*

These two ladies were well-known to F. W. H. Myers, who says: "I asked Miss Danvers to appear to Mrs. Fleetwood without forewarning that lady and to send me a letter-card to tell me of the attempt before she knew whether it had succeeded or no. On June 20th, 1894, Myers received the following letter dated June 19th from Miss Danvers:

"On Sunday night (June 17th) at 12 p.m. I tried to appear to Mrs. Fleetwood (at a distance of about 9 miles) and succeeded in feeling as if I were really in her room. I had previously written my statement, which I enclose, together with Mrs. Fleetwood's, which she has just sent me. She wrote it also *at the time*, not knowing I was trying to appear. I was lying down, not kneeling, but the other details are correct."

The two enclosures were first a signed memorandum by Miss Danvers:

"June 17th, 1894, 12 p.m. I write this just before trying



to appear to Mrs. F. My hair is down, and I am going to lie down and try to appear with my eyes closed."

The second memorandum signed by Mrs. Fleetwood was as follows :

"Sunday night, June 17th, 1894—I woke from my first sleep to see Edith Danvers apparently kneeling on an easy chair by my bedside, her profile turned towards me, her hair flowing, and eyes closed, or looking quite down. I felt startled at first, as I always do, on seeing visions in waking moments, but determined to keep quiet; and after I was fully awake and able to reason with myself the figure still remained, and then gradually faded like a dissolving view. I got up and looked at the clock. It was just twelve. I was alone in the room. As I now write, it is about two minutes after twelve."

Myers says that in conversation with Miss Danvers on June 23rd, she said she had seen in a sort of flash Mrs. F. start up in bed, rest on her elbow and look towards her. She had not been clearly aware of her own attitude in Mrs. F.'s room, although she seemed aware of her *position* which corresponded to the place towards which Mrs. Fleetwood gazed.

*Case of H. M. Wesermann* (F. W. H. MYERS : *Human Personality*, Vol. I, p. 699).

H. M. Wesermann had made numerous attempts to transfer mental images to sleeping friends—i.e. to impress dreams upon them. He had been successful in four previous cases. The experiment described below resulted in an apparition. The intention in Wesermann's mind was that in a dream a lady who had been dead five years should appear to Lieut. —n and incite him to good deeds. Contrary to expectation, Lieut. —n had not gone to bed at the time

of the experiment, but was discussing the French campaign with his friend Lieut. S—— in an ante-room. Lieut. ——n said that suddenly the door of the room opened, the lady entered, dressed in white with a black kerchief and uncovered head, greeted S—— with her hand three times in a friendly manner, then turned to ——n, nodded to him and returned through the doorway. Lieut. S—— gave the following written account of the incident :

“Herr ——n came to pay me a visit at my lodgings about a league from A——. He stayed the night with me. After supper, and when we were both undressed, I was sitting on my bed and Herr ——n was standing by the door of the next room on the point also of going to bed. This was about half-past ten. We were speaking partly about indifferent subjects and partly about the events of the French campaign. Suddenly the door opened without a sound, and a lady entered, very pale, taller than Herr ——n, about five feet four inches in height, strong and broad of figure, dressed in white, but with a large black kerchief which reached to below the waist. She entered with bare head, greeted me with the hand three times in complimentary fashion, turned round to the left towards Herr ——n, and waved her hand to him three times; after which the figure quietly, and again without any creaking of the door, went out. We followed at once in order to discover whether there was any deception, but found nothing. The strangest thing was this, that our night-watch of two men, whom I had shortly before found on the watch, were now asleep, though at my first call they were on the alert, and that the door of the room, which always opens with a good deal of noise, did not make the slightest sound when opened by the figure.”

It should be unnecessary to say that the dead woman had nothing to do with the appearance of the apparition. This case shows the feature of collective percipience, even though the agent, Wesermann, did not know there were two possible percipients.

### CRISIS APPARITIONS

#### *Case of Hon. Miss K. Ward:*

"Two years ago, on awaking one morning at 8 o'clock, I saw a distinct appearance of my sister Emily, seated at the foot of my bed in her nightgown. She was rocking herself backwards and forwards as if in pain. Putting out my hand to touch her, the phantasm vanished. Going into my sister's room half an hour later, I related to her my experience, and she (being still in much pain) informed me that at 8 o'clock she had actually been in the position above described *on her own bed* and had meditated coming into my room, but had not liked to disturb me. (She had been perfectly well the night before.) My sister's room is at some distance from mine, being divided therefrom by a corridor and cross-door."

#### *Case of Mr. Kearne:*

Mr. Kearne, who was the percipient, had lived for some years with two intimate friends, Alfred Hobday and Arthur Bent. He was expecting them back about 10 p.m. from a musical tour of the provinces, and was sitting reading about 10.50 p.m.

"I had read some twenty minutes or so, was thoroughly absorbed in the book, my mind was perfectly quiet, and for the time being my friends were quite forgotten, when suddenly, without a moment's warning, my whole being

seemed roused to the highest state of tension or aliveness, and I was aware, with an intenseness not easily imagined by those who have never experienced it, that another being or presence was not only in the room but close to me. I put my book down, and although my excitement was great, I felt quite collected and not conscious of any sense of fear. Without changing my position and looking straight at the fire, I knew somehow that my friend A. H. was standing at my left elbow, but so far behind me as to be hidden by the arm-chair in which I was leaning back. Moving my eyes round slightly without otherwise changing my position, the lower portion of one leg became visible, and I instantly recognised the grey-blue material of trousers he often wore, but the stuff appeared semi-transparent, reminding me of tobacco smoke in consistency. I could have touched it with my hand without moving more than my left arm. With that curious instinctive wish not to see more of such a 'figure', I did no more than glance once or twice at the apparition, and then directed my gaze steadily at the fire in front of me. An appreciable space of time passed—probably several seconds in all, but seeming in reality much longer—when the most curious thing happened. Standing upright between me and the window on my left, and at a distance of about four feet from me and almost immediately behind my chair, I saw perfectly distinctly the figure of my friend—the face very pale, the head slightly thrown back, the eyes shut, and on one side of the throat, just under the jaw, a wound with blood on it. The figure remained motionless with the arms close to the sides, and for some time, how long I cannot say, I looked steadily at it; then all at once roused myself, turned deliberately round, the figure vanished, and I realised instantly that I had seen

the figure behind me without moving from my first position—an impossible feat physically. I am perfectly certain I never moved my position from the first appearance of the figure as seen physically, until it disappeared on my turning round.”

Mr. Kearne described his anxiety for the following forty-five minutes, until at 11.35 p.m. a hansom-cab drew up. A. B. came upstairs and said, “Come and see A. H.; what a state he is in!” They found him in the bathroom with collar and shirt torn open, bathing a wound under his jaw which was bleeding. It appeared that they had been to a restaurant after arriving in London, that A. H. had complained of feeling faint from the heat of the place, and going out into the fresh air had fainted and fallen forward, striking his jaw on the edge of the kerb. Mr. Kearne calculated, from the distance and average speed of a cab, that this incident must have been within about three minutes of the time of appearance of the apparition.

#### POST-MORTEM APPARITIONS

##### *Case of Miss L. Dodson:*

“On June 5th, 1887, a Sunday evening, between 11 and 12 at night, being awake, my name was called three times. I answered twice, thinking it was my uncle, ‘Come in, Uncle George, I am awake’, but the third time I recognised the voice as that of my mother, who had been dead 16 years. I said ‘Mamma!’ She then came round a screen near my bedside with two children in her arms, and placed them in my arms and put the bedclothes over them and said, ‘Lucy, promise me to take care of them, for their mother is just dead.’ I said, ‘Yes, mamma.’ She repeated, ‘*Promise* me to take care of them.’ I replied, ‘Yes, I promise you,’ and I added, ‘Oh, mamma, stay and speak

to me, I am so wretched.' She replied, 'Not yet, my child.' Then she seemed to go round the screen again, and I remained, feeling the children to be still in my arms, and fell asleep. When I awoke there was nothing. Tuesday morning, June 7th, I received the news of my sister-in-law's death. She had given birth to a child three weeks before, which I did not know till after her death.

"I was in bed but not asleep, and the room was lighted by a gas-light in the street outside. I was out of health and in anxiety about family troubles. My age was 42. I was quite alone. I mentioned the circumstances to my uncle the next morning. He thought I was sickening for brain fever. [I have had other experiences, but] only to the extent of having felt a hand laid on my head, and sometimes on my hands, at times of great trouble."

To questions put to Miss Dodson the following answers were received :

- "(1) 'Yes [I was] perfectly awake [at the time].'
- "(2) 'Was she in anxiety about her sister-in-law?' 'None whatever; I did not know a second baby had been born; in fact, had not the remotest idea of my sister-in-law's illness.'
- "(3) 'Did she think at the time that the words about the children's mother having died referred to her sister-in-law? Had she two children?' 'No, I was at a total loss to imagine whose children they were.'
- "(4) 'I was living in Albany Street, Regent's Park, at the time. My sister-in-law, as I heard afterwards, was confined at St. André (near Bruges), and removed to Bruges three days prior to her death. (N.B.—She had two children including the new-born baby.)'
- "(5) 'My late uncle only saw business connections, and having no relations or personal friends in London,

save myself, would not have been likely to mention the occurrence to anyone.' ”

*Case of Mr. F. G. (Proc. S.P.R., Vol. VI, p. 17) :*

“In 1867, my only sister, a young lady of 18 years, died suddenly of cholera, in St. Louis, Mo. My attachment for her was very strong, and the blow a severe one to me. A year or so after her death the writer became a commercial traveller, and it was in 1876 while on one of my Western trips that the event occurred.

“I had ‘drummed’ the city of St. Joseph, Mo., and had gone to my room at the Pacific House to send in my orders, which were unusually large ones, so that I was in a very happy frame of mind indeed. My thoughts, of course, were about these orders, knowing how pleased my house would be at my success. I had not been thinking of my late sister, or in any manner reflecting on the past. The hour was high noon, and the sun was shining cheerfully into my room. While busily smoking a cigar and writing out my orders, I suddenly became conscious that someone was sitting on my left, with one arm resting on the table. Quick as a flash I turned and distinctly saw the form of my dead sister, and for a brief second or so looked her squarely in the face; and so sure was I that it was she that I sprang forward in delight, calling her by name, and, as I did so, the apparition instantly vanished. Naturally I was startled and dumbfounded, almost doubting my senses; but [with] the cigar in my mouth, and pen in hand, and with the ink still moist on my letter, I satisfied myself I had not been dreaming and was wide awake. I was near enough to touch her, had it been a physical possibility, and noted her features, expression, and details of dress, etc. She appeared as if alive. Her eyes looked kindly and perfectly natural into mine. Her skin was so

life-like that I could see the glow or moisture on its surface, and, on the whole, there was no change in her appearance, otherwise than when alive.

"Now comes the most remarkable confirmation of my statement, which cannot be doubted by those who know what I state actually occurred. This visitation, or whatever you may call it, so impressed me that I took the next train home, and in the presence of my parents and others I related what had occurred. My father, a man of rare good sense and very practical, was inclined to ridicule me, as he saw how earnestly I believed what I stated; but he, too, was amazed when later on I told them of a bright red line or scratch on the right-hand side of my sister's face, which I distinctly had seen. When I mentioned this, my mother rose trembling to her feet and nearly fainted away, and as soon as she sufficiently recovered her self-possession, with tears streaming down her face, she exclaimed that I had indeed seen my sister, as no living mortal but herself was aware of that scratch, which she had accidentally made while doing some little act of kindness after my sister's death. She said she well remembered how pained she was to think she should have, unintentionally, marred the features of her dead daughter, and that unknown to all, how she had carefully obliterated all traces of the slight scratch with the aid of powder, etc., and that she had never mentioned it to a human being, from that day to this. In proof, neither my father nor any of our family had detected it, and positively were unaware of the incident, yet I saw the scratch as bright as if just made. So strangely impressed was my mother that even after she had retired to rest, she got up and dressed, came to me and told me she knew at least that I had seen my sister. A few weeks later my mother died, happy in her



belief she would rejoin her favourite daughter in a better world."

In a further letter Mr. F. G. adds :

"There was nothing of a spiritual or ghostly nature in either the form or dress of my sister, she appearing perfectly natural, and dressed in clothing that she usually wore in life, and which was familiar to me. From her position at the table I could only see her from the waist up, and her appearance and everything she wore is indelibly photographed in my mind. I even had time to notice the collar and little breastpin she wore, as well as the comb in her hair, after the style then worn by young ladies. The dress had no particular association for me or my mother, no more so than others she was in the habit of wearing; but today, while I have forgotten all her other dresses, pins and combs, I could go to her trunk (which we have just as she left it) and pick out the very dress and ornaments she wore when she appeared to me, so well do I remember it."

The mother herself died a few weeks after the apparition to her son. She was the one living person to whom the "scratch" would have significance. It suggests that there was definite purpose behind the appearance at that time.

### HAUNTINGS

There is a type of apparition which appears to be linked with a particular place, often a particular room or house. Its behaviour is usually of the somnambulistic type. It carries out a limited repertoire of actions of a stereotyped kind, and then fades away until the next appearance. This is of course the traditional "ghost". I shall give only one example, of which the account is very much abbreviated.

*The Morton Case* (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 311-32) :

The six percipients in this case were all interviewed by F. W. H. Myers. The principal percipient, Miss R. C. Morton, was a young medical student, and the testimony was very consistent. The phenomena covered a period of years 1882-9, and the full record is an impressive and straightforward one, giving an account of the large number of occasions when it was seen and the number of witnesses to it. There was substantial agreement in the descriptions of the figure.

"The figure was that of a tall lady, dressed in black of a soft woollen material, judging from the slight sound in moving. The face was hidden in a handkerchief held in the right hand. . . . I saw the upper part of the left side of the forehead, and a little of the hair above. Her left hand was nearly hidden by her sleeve and a fold of her dress. As she held it down, a portion of a widow's cuff was visible on both wrists, so that the whole impression was that of a lady in widow's weeds. There was no cap on the head, but a general effect of blackness suggests a bonnet, with long veil or a hood."

During the two years 1882-4 Miss Morton saw the figure about half a dozen times, and on three separate occasions it was seen by her sister, Mrs. K., by a housemaid, and by her young brother and another little boy. The appearances reached a maximum in July and August 1884, thereafter gradually diminishing in frequency to 1889. From then on the appearances ceased. The light muffled footsteps associated with the figure persisted a little longer, but they also eventually ceased. For the first two years Miss Morton describes it as appearing to be so solid and life-like that it was often mistaken for a real person. It intercepted the light, but Miss M. was not able to determine if the figure cast a

shadow. Its appearance later became less distinct. Twice Miss M. reported having seen the figure pass through fine strings, and says: "It was not that there was nothing there to touch, but that she always seemed to be *beyond* me, and if followed into a corner simply disappeared." An extract from Miss Morton's account will illustrate the type of experience.

"On the evening of August 11th we were sitting in the drawing-room with the gas lit but the shutters not shut, the light outside getting dusk, my brother and a friend had just given up tennis, finding it dark; my eldest sister, Mrs. K., and myself both saw the figure on the balcony outside, looking in at the window. She stood there for some minutes, then walked to the end and back again, after which she seemed to disappear. She soon after came into the drawing-room, when I saw her but my sister did not. The same evening my sister E. saw her on the stairs as she came out of a room on the upper landing.

"The following evening, 12th August, while coming up the garden, I walked towards the orchard, when I saw the figure cross the orchard, go along the carriage drive in front of the house, and in at the open side door, across the hall and into the drawing-room, I following. She crossed the drawing-room and took up her usual position behind the couch in the bow window. My father came in soon after and I told him she was there. He could not see the figure, but went up to where I showed him she was. She then went swiftly round behind him, across the room, out of the door and along the hall, disappearing as usual near the garden door, we both following her. We looked out into the garden, having first to unlock the garden door, but saw nothing of her.

"On 12th August, about 8 p.m. and still quite light, my

sister E. was singing in the back drawing-room. I heard her stop abruptly, come out into the hall and call me. She said she had seen the figure in the drawing-room close behind her as she sat at the piano. I went back into the room with her and saw the figure in the bow window at her usual place. I spoke to her several times, but had no answer. She stood there for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour; then went across the room to the door and along the passage, disappearing in the same place by the garden door.

"My sister M. then came in from the garden, saying she had seen her coming up the kitchen steps outside. We all three then went into the garden, when Mrs. K. called out from the window on the first storey that she had just seen her pass across the lawn in front and along the carriage drive towards the orchard. This evening then, altogether four people saw her. My father was then away and my youngest brother was out."

Miss Morton remarks that the figure was not called up by a desire to see it, and says that on all those occasions when parties of them had sat up at night hoping to see it, they had always been disappointed. The figure was believed to be connected with a lady who had lived in the house (the second Mrs. S.) and who had died in September 1878. Mr. S., an Anglo-Indian, had lived in the house from 1860 to 1876. His first wife, to whom he was deeply attached, died, and he became an intemperate drinker. His second wife had hoped to cure him, but instead took to drinking herself, and their life was embittered and quarrelsome. The grounds for identifying the figure with the second Mrs. S. were (*a*) the widow's garb—Mr. S. had died two years before she did; (*b*) several people who had known her identified her from the description, and Miss Morton picked out the sister of Mrs. S. from a number of portraits as being most like the figure.

Miss Morton gives grounds for believing that the apparition was on two occasions seen by dogs. She also makes the interesting observation that when familiarity with the apparition had eliminated her feelings of awe, so that she could be analytical and observe more closely, she was "conscious of a feeling of *loss*, as if I had lost power to the figure".

#### THE NATURE OF APPARITIONS

Many questions now arise for us. Are they objective or subjective phenomena; that is, do they differ in their nature from tables and chairs and bodies of people whom we see around us? How are they created? Why do they not last long? Is there any evidence that they are sometimes visitations of departed persons, etc.?

It will not be possible to go into these questions fully here, and the reader is referred to books of Tyrrell and others (see list at the end of this chapter). As a preliminary to considering the nature of apparitions, we must consider the nature of ordinary perception. When a person says "I see a green apple", this act of perception is not so simple as the plain man supposes. The person is, in fact, aware of certain sense-data, such as a shape of greenness, with shiny patches and having a nearly circular outline. These sense-data are all he really *knows*, but in the act of perception he makes an intuitive jump beyond the sense-data and assumes that out there in space is an object, and that the greenness, shininess, and roundness are properties of that object's surface. If we think carefully about it, we see that we have no direct acquaintance of this sort with things outside ourselves; we only have direct acquaintance with our own sense-data. Indeed, one person (who is colour blind) might think the apple was grey, another might see it without shine or oval in shape. Who is right—if these properties belong to the

object's surface? Since many observers may each have sense-data with much in common, and since using the sense of touch they might all agree that there was an impenetrable region of space outside themselves to which their sense-data seemed causally related, they might agree to refer to this region as the cause of their apple-like sense-data. (They might call it a subsistent object.) We might put down the simple equation :

Material object for a person = Subsistent object plus  
person's sense-data.

Of the nature of the subsistent object to which the individual's sense-data are causally related we know nothing and can know nothing through our senses. It may well be that the world of subsistent objects is a world of ideas sustained by a Divine mind—that subsistent objects are, in fact, of the nature of thought. Indeed, if we try to imagine them as anything else, we find that we are really attaching properties of a sensory kind to them. The process of creating and sustaining what we call the order of Nature may thus be something as follows. There is a world of Ideas (or subsistent objects). This in its turn creates and sustains a world of an infinite variety of sense-data. Our finite minds are limited in the selection of sense-data they can respond to (because the special senses are limited in their range). Since we have finite minds in some sense akin to the Divine mind, we then interpret the sense-data as proceeding from a material object. This is our feeble entering into knowledge of the original Idea.

G. N. M. Tyrrell regards the apparition as an aggregate of sense-data without the subsistent object. (See the above equation.) His view is that the sense-data are real enough, but that their perception is not stimulated by light waves falling on the retina, or sound waves on the eardrum, or

pressure on the hand. The sense-data are stimulated inwardly or centrally—by psychical means. In ordinary perception the sense-data are apparently stimulated through light waves falling on the eye or sound waves on the ear. Even this, Tyrrell thinks, may be misleading. He suggests that all sense-data are “centrally” or psychically stimulated, but that in ordinary perception the psychical stimulus semi-automatically follows the brain’s stimulus by a special sense. It does so for much the same reason (*viz.* self-preservation) as a motorist stops or starts following the signal of the traffic lights. If, however, as in rare cases, the psychical stimulus is given without the prior brain excitation by a special sense, then we have an apparition. Tyrrell would therefore view apparitions as subjective. The sense-data are real enough—but he would not admit that apparitions reflect light so that they could be photographed, or emit sound which could be recorded on a tape, or exert pressure such as to move an object or leave footprints.

On the other hand, I consider that apparitions may have the same sort of objectivity as chairs and tables. I take the view that a finite mind (we call it the “agent”) can do something similar to the creative activity of the Divine mind, and create a subsistent object with associated sense-data. It is admittedly a weak and transient construction compared with the strength and permanence of natural objects. A suitably sensitive percipient may, however, perceive it in the usual way. I think there is no essential difference between the status of apparitions and ordinary objects: the contrast is between their density and persistence in time, due to the weakness of the subsistent object in the former case. Because of their rare and unheralded appearance, the possibility of photographing an apparition is obviously going to be small, but there is one recorded instance which suggests that this view may be correct and that they do scatter light. The

photograph has been published in *Country Life*, December 16th, 1936.

“Captain Provand, Art Director, and Mr. Indre Shira, Court Photographer of London, were photographing Raynham Hall, Norfolk, seat of the Marquess of Townshend. It was a routine commission. Neither of these experienced photographers was interested in Psychical Research. About 4 p.m. on September 19th, 1936, they were ready to photograph the oak staircase. Mr. Shira, observing what he described as ‘an ethereal veiled form’ moving slowly down the staircase, shouted excitedly, and Captain Provand, whose head was under the cover, removed the cap of the lens, while Mr. Shira pressed the flashlight pistol. Captain Provand was sceptical and not in a position to have seen the apparition; Mr. Shira stoutly maintained that he had seen it. When the negatives were being developed Captain Provand suddenly exclaimed, ‘Good Lord, there’s something on the staircase negative after all.’ Mr. Shira took a glance at the negative and then hurried off to bring in Mr. Jones, manager of Blake, Sandford and Blake, chemists, as a witness. He arrived in time to see the negative being taken from the developer and placed in the hypo bath. Mr. Harry Price examined the negative, which he pronounced innocent of any faking, and was unable to shake the witnesses’ story.”

Of course it may well be that the two viewpoints, Tyrrell’s and the present writer’s, are both true, and represent two different types of apparition. We tend too easily to imagine that of two theories *either* one *or* the other must be right.

Let us look in a little more detail at the conditions under which apparitions are created. There is always apparently an agent—the initiating mind. In the post-mortem cases this is ostensibly the persisting discarnate mind. In cases of haunting this may also be true—but I shall make a reservation and



refer to this later. The agent initiates it and supplies the original emotional energy to create and sustain it. The percipient, however, plays a part which may not be quite so passive as it appears to be on conscious levels. One of the notable things is that where the apparition is of the agent's person, as with Miss Danver, Miss Ward's sister, and Mr. Kearne's friend, the agent cannot be supposed to do more than create the general idea of himself being in a certain place. None of us know in detail what we look like from a point in space external to our body. The percipient's mind clearly plays a part in this. Likewise the apparition often does things the agent had not envisaged, and shows a knowledge of the environment in which it appears, which the agent's conscious mind does not possess. It would seem as though there is a collaboration below the conscious level between certain functions or levels of the two minds, those of agent and percipient.

Tyrrell considers that the apparitional structure is half-way in its characteristics between the mechanical and the purposive or volitional, and uses the term *idea-pattern* to describe it. It is to be regarded as a psychical marionette or animated thought-form, and not as a vehicle of consciousness. Its repertoire of actions is usually rather limited, and having expended the limited energy which sustained the subsistent *idea-pattern*, it fades out.

It may be asked what is the distinction between an apparition and a materialised figure such as we discussed in the previous chapter. I do not think we know enough to say anything of value. If we had to deal with a perfect apparition, that is to say one which created the response of seeing, hearing, and touching, there would be no grounds for distinguishing it from the body of an ordinary person and any distinction would have to be on the level of mental capacity. My inclination is towards the view that we may have a whole

range of apparitions, from those of the "Tyrrell" type to those full-scale, solid materialisations such as Price and Crookes recorded. The "Tyrrell" type is subjective and psychically created by a co-operative activity between the agent's and percipient's mind. It could not scatter light nor create sound, nor present resistance to touch. The apparition is, indeed, a vehicle for a telepathic stimulus received from the agent's mind, and the little dramatic scene is a joint construction of certain levels of the two minds. It is the sort of creative activity which occurs frequently in dreams—where, however, only the percipient's mind is supposed to be involved. If we feel the need for a medium in which the psychic drama is constructed—the psychic æther is to hand. There seems to be another level of mind which can now become operative and create the objective materialised entity which in its perfection is indistinguishable by any physical test from a human being. We may have apparitions of an infinitely graded variety between these extremes. They may partake for the percipient of both the self and the not-self. They may be an admixture of the subjective and objective. As I have said elsewhere—"It is the level on which awareness is focused which determines what world will be described as objective : experience on levels interior to this will then be described as subjective. This distinction is one of convenience, but it does not correspond to anything significant in the levels themselves : it describes only the relationship of an individual to these levels or worlds." Thus in dreams we judge (at the time) the scenery to be objective, but our thoughts are still subjective.

#### OUT-OF-THE-BODY EXPERIENCES

The apparitions so far discussed range from the subjective psychical marionette which is animated by a few limited ideas to the "full-blooded" materialised figure through which

a mind appears to find more or less complete expression. The phenomena of which I propose to give some examples now are not, I think, related to apparitions, but this place may be a convenient one to refer to them. In introducing them I think it is sufficient to say this. The impression of those who had the experience was that they were outside their body—which in some cases they could see lying on the bed or in some other posture. Here the agent, in full consciousness, appears to be functioning in a subtle vehicle or body although still connected by a sort of "cord" with the physical one. The agent does not, in the recorded cases, appear able to manifest as an apparition to others. Whether this is possible or not must therefore remain an open question, but on *a priori* grounds there would seem to be nothing impossible in it. The following cases are from *Journ. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 206-11 (1948):

*Case 1:*

"I was stationed in Aden in 1913 and was seriously ill with dysentery. I got to the stage of having to be lifted from side to side, as I was too weak to move myself in bed. From the instructions I heard the M.O. give the orderlies (we had no nurses in Aden then) I gathered that a collapse was expected and that in the event of the occurrence I was to be given a saline injection via the rectum.

"Shortly afterwards, I found myself lying parallel to the bed, about three or four feet above it and face downwards. Below me I saw my body and witnessed the giving of the rectal injection. I listened to all the conversation of the two orderlies and of a strange M.O. who was directing affairs and was indeed a very interested spectator of the whole business. I remember well that the saline came from an enamel kind of vessel which was connected to a rubber tube—the vessel being held up at arm's length by an orderly.

"I found myself next back in bed, feeling much better. I told my story to the orderlies, who were quite sceptical. I particularly enquired about the strange M.O. I found there had been one; he was *en route* for Bombay, I think, and had called at the hospital in time to help. I never saw him again.

"I have always been convinced that my spirit (or soul if you will) had actually left my body but returned as a result of the injection. When kindred subjects have cropped up I have told friends of my experience. They have listened in a tolerant fashion, but I have always felt that my story was really being received 'with nods and becks and wreathed smiles'. You may imagine then how delighted I was to hear you narrate an almost similar experience—and I sat down immediately and wrote to you. . . .

"On reading the above I find I have omitted to mention that the orderlies said I couldn't possibly have any knowledge of the matter, as I was quite unconscious before and after the operation."

*Case 2:*

"Six years ago I had pneumonia and pleurisy combined, and I remember the doctor saying (whilst in my room) that he could do no more and I must fight it out myself. I cannot think I was supposed to hear this aside. With what strength I had, I pinched myself and said, 'You *shall* get better.' Now this was the crisis. I feel quite certain that I left my body. I felt it getting heavier and heavier and sinking into the bed. I was sitting on top of a high wardrobe near the door looking down on my bed at myself, and the nurse sitting by me. I was disgusted at my unshaven appearance. I saw everything in the room—the mirror on the dressing-table and all small details. Fear was

absent entirely. The next thing I remember was my nurse holding my hand and shortly afterwards I heard her say : 'The crisis has passed.'

"Some time after all this I told the nurse what had happened to me, described what she was doing at the time and the details of the room. She said I was given up and that it was because I was delirious.

"No, I was dead for that time, but made myself go back."

*Case 3:*

"I was an armoured-car officer engaged in medium- and long-range reconnaissance work with the 21st Army Group. At about 2 30 p.m. on August 3rd, 1944, I was in a small armoured scout car which received a direct hit from a German anti-tank gun. Our car, which was full of various explosives, grenades, phosphorus bombs, etc., blew up. I might mention that it was stationary at the time, having just halted. The force of the explosion threw me about twenty feet away from the car and over a five-foot hedge. My clothes, etc., were on fire, and there were various pieces of phosphorus sticking to me which were also burning. Now, my immediate reaction to the explosion, which appeared to me from the middle of it like a great white cold sheet, with a strong smell of cordite, was (naturally enough) fear. I imagined for a split second that I had gone to hell, and I quickly tried to recollect some particular vice which might have been my qualification. It is interesting to notice that I did not see any rapid 'trailer' of my past life as, I believe, drowning persons report. All this took a fraction of a second, and the next experience was definitely unusual. I was conscious of being two persons—one, lying on the ground in a field where I had fallen from the blast, my clothes, etc., on

fire, and waving my limbs wildly, at the same time uttering moans and gibbering with fear—I was quite conscious of both making these sounds, and at the same time hearing them as though coming from another person. The other ‘me’ was floating up in the air, about twenty feet from the ground, from which position I could see not only my other self on the ground, but also the hedge, the road, and the car, which was surrounded by smoke and burning fiercely. I remember quite distinctly telling myself, ‘It’s no use gibbering like that—roll over and over to put the flames out.’ This my ground body eventually did, rolling over into a ditch under the hedge where there was a slight amount of water. The flames went out, and at this stage I suddenly became one person again.

“Of course, the aerial viewpoint can be explained up to a point as a ‘photograph’ taken subconsciously as I was passing over the hedge as a result of the blast. This, however, does not explain the fact that I saw ‘myself’ on the ground quite clearly and for what seemed a long time, though it could not have been more than a minute or so.

“Naturally there can be no witnesses as to this, and the fact that I have told the occurrence to a number of people since might have led me to exaggeration of those details—though I do not think this is the case. I can still remember all the details quite clearly as they happened at the time.”

The above examples are cases where acute illness or shock was the cause of the “projection”, but those who are interested should study several books which relate experiences by S. J. Muldoon and others of an experimental kind. All such experiences need collating and studying for the light they may throw on the structure of the human psyche. The late F. S. Smythe, a distinguished mountaineer, has described in one of his books, *The Spirit of the Hills*, an occasion when

he fully expected to be killed. The stress of the experience resulted in an out-of-the-body experience—which can only have lasted a few seconds—which he says convinced him “that consciousness survives beyond the grave”.

*Books for Further Reading*

1. *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, Chaps. VI and VII: F. W. H. MYERS (Longmans Green & Co., 1903).
2. *Apparitions* (The Seventh Myers Memorial Lecture): G. N. M. TYRRELL (S.P.R., 1943, and Duckworth & Co., 1953).
3. *Ghosts and Apparitions*: W. H. SALTER (G. Bell & Son, 1938).
4. *The Imprisoned Splendour*, Chaps. IX and X: R. C. JOHNSON (Hodder & Stoughton, 1953).
5. *The Projection of the Astral Body*: MULDOON and CARRINGTON (Rider & Co.).
6. *Astral Projection*: OLIVER FOX (Rider & Co., 1939).

## CHAPTER VIII

### MEDIUMSHIP

WE are familiar with three states of consciousness : the waking state, the dreaming state, and the state of deep dreamless sleep. There are, however, many other states in which consciousness is withdrawn from the normal waking level—which collectively we may call trance states. Some can be created by hypnosis, some can be created by drugs like mescaline or by anæsthetics, and others can be entered by certain yogic practices. A “medium” or a “sensitive” can pass voluntarily into one of these states, in which consciousness is withdrawn to an interior level of the self, and can at the same time maintain a “communication line”—by writing or speaking to those around. It is therefore possible for a sensitive to exteriorise knowledge possessed by levels of his own deeper self.

We have seen something of the powers ( $\psi$ -faculty) of the human mind, and in mediumistic trance such powers appear frequently to be exercised. It is thus commonly found that where persons are sitting with an entranced medium they may receive surprising information. The commonest of all phenomena is the “withdrawal” of information or knowledge from the mind of one of the sitters (i.e. thought reading or telepathy) and its re-presentation to the sitter through the voice of the medium. Another not uncommon phenomenon is the presentation to the sitters of a piece of information, not in their minds but which they can subsequently verify as factual. This, of course, may be due to the medium’s exercise of clairvoyance. Rarer, but not uncommon, is the presentation to a sitter of the prediction of events which are



subsequently fulfilled. It is rarer, because the possibility of access to precognitive data requires rapport between the medium and certain deep levels of the sitter's self.

The presentation of such data to a sitter by an entranced medium can be very impressive, and unless the sitter has an appreciation of the range and possibilities of  $\psi$ -faculty which the medium may be exercising, it is easy to assume that the source must be some discarnate being, and to assume further that this being has *ipso facto* access to ranges of information beyond our own. As regards the latter assumption, it may be true, but how are we to *know* in view of the potentially unlimited sweep of  $\psi$ -faculty? As regards the former assumption, which is of course basic to spiritualism, we shall have to consider critically what evidence there is to support it. We shall do this in the present chapter and the following one. Proof of its truth is notoriously difficult to come by, for the reasons we have just expressed. It will indeed be appreciated that if we postulate surviving discarnate beings, their mode of communication will presumably be through telepathic rapport with the medium's own subconscious. Any "proof" of communication from a discarnate mind must therefore depend on a myriad subtle psychological characteristics of that deceased person which are convincing to those who knew and remembered him. Of course the determined sceptic will maintain that all of these were drawn from the memories of the sitter or of other persons. Sometimes a séance of personal interest to the sitters is invaded by an ostensibly deceased personality, who communicates through the medium and gives abundant information of himself of which none is known to the sitters. The determined sceptic can still say that the medium's subconscious mind exercised  $\psi$ -faculty to gather this correct information, and that it was presented in a dramatic form and attributed to a deceased person. Coercive "proof" is difficult to obtain,

and as we shall see when discussing a number of examples, the decision as to which he considers the more probable hypothesis is one for each individual to make for himself.

#### TYPES OF MEDIUMSHIP

A broad subdivision may be made into (a) physical mediums and (b) mental mediums. In the presence of the first type, para-normal physical phenomena occur, such as psycho-kinetic effects, materialisations, apports, etc. The second class is those which we are now considering who either through speech or writing, while in trance, provide information of an extrasensory type. Phœbe Payne, in her book *Man's Latent Powers* (Faber & Faber, 1938), has made a rough classification of sensitives which is based upon her own clairvoyant perception of what is taking place in trance. She writes of : (a) The natural poltergeist medium. (b) The medium who uses unconscious self-hypnosis. In this group there is no evidence of any external mind. A part of the medium's own mind becomes a dramatic actor and impersonates one character after another from Julius Cæsar to Queen Victoria ! The sentiments attributed to them have frequently an amusing similarity to those of the medium's own views. (c) The medium who appears partially controlled. Here the bizarre character of dramatic impersonation has gone and the phenomena ostensibly suggest a discarnate mind communicating, presumably by telepathic rapport, with the medium. (d) The completely controlled or dead-trance medium, where it is suggested that there is a withdrawal of the "astral-projection" type, permitting the manipulation of the physical mechanism of the medium by a discarnate being. (e) The receptive but self-controlled medium, who remains self-conscious and directs his own psychism at his own will. In effect, this type has para-normal

faculty well developed and can use it when he so determines.

Such a classification is (without our prejudging the issue of survival) a useful descriptive one. At least it indicates the variety of phenomena which are certain to be encountered by anyone investigating mediumship. In the groups (*b*), (*c*), and (*d*) a phenomenon known to investigators as the "guide" or "control" frequently appears as soon as the medium passes into trance. This invariably claims to be a discarnate spirit who has acquired some proficiency in manipulating the medium's mind or brain, as the case may be. He claims to pass on messages from discarnate persons, to describe them, and in general to act as a go-between. Occasionally he will step aside and allow the ostensible communicator to operate in his place directly through the medium's entranced organism. There has been much discussion of the status and nature of these "controls", who may claim to be anything from an innocent child to a Red Indian chief. Substantially there are two views about them. The control may be some level or creation of the medium's subconscious mind: a secondary personality, who frequently exemplifies traits and qualities excluded from the conscious personality. Such a view sees in the existence of the "control" a scapegoat or convenient defence behind which the medium may shelter. An alternative view accepts their claim to be discarnate beings and regards their function as protective against indiscriminate invasion by others, and in some measure as that of skilled manipulation of the medium's brain-mechanism. I incline to think that both views may have some truth in them, but that the problem of communication may be more complex than that assumed by these points of view.

We shall now look briefly at the activity of a number of famous mediums.

## THE MEDIUMSHIP OF MRS. PIPER

Mrs. Piper was an American woman whose mediumship between 1884 and 1911 was closely studied by some of the ablest investigators in the field of Psychical Research. Her mediumship may be conveniently regarded as falling into four phases. (1) 1884-92. During this period her chief control was Phinuit, who claimed to be a French physician. A number of others appeared from time to time who used such names as "Chlorine", Mrs. Siddons, J. S. Bach, Longfellow, Commodore Vanderbilt, and an Italian girl, Loretta Ponchini. During this period the voice of Mrs. Piper was the means of communication, and three reports were published—one by Professor William James, one by an English committee (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. VI), and one by Dr. Richard Hodgson (*Proc.*, Vol. VIII). (2) 1892-7. Phinuit still appeared, but a friend of Dr. Hodgson named George Pelham ("G. P."), who died as the result of an accident, played a dominant role. A long report of this phase was made by Dr. Hodgson (*Proc.*, Vol. XIII) and Professor Newbold (Vol. XIV). The chief means of communication was writing while in trance, but quite frequently there would be simultaneous control, with Phinuit talking through Mrs. Piper's voice, and G. P. writing on a different theme through Mrs. Piper's hand. (3) 1897-1905 (when Hodgson died). During this period a group of controls, calling themselves Emperor, Rector, Doctor, etc., who purported to be spirits who had communicated through W. Stainton Moses when he was alive, now took control. Reports of this period are found in *Proc.*, Vols. XVI and XXIV. (4) In the final phase, 1906-11, a control claiming to be Hodgson also appeared, and reports appear in *Proc.*, Vols. XXII, XXIII, and XXIV. Finally, a critical appraisal is made in a 600-page report (*Proc.*, Vol. XXVIII) by Mrs. Henry Sidgwick in 1915.

From this enormous mass of material I shall select a few opinions from the reports of Dr. Hodgson (Vol. XIII) and Mrs. Sidgwick, since the conclusions arrived at by these investigators are opposed.

It is probably true that in the second phase of Mrs. Piper's mediumship her faculty was at its best, and Hodgson writes of the convincing communication of his friend G. P., to whom he had introduced no fewer than 150 sitters, of whom 30 were friends of G. P. living. All were recognised: "The recognition was clear and full, and accompanied by an appreciation of the relations which subsisted between G. P. living and the sitters."

"Nearly two weeks later came his most intimate friends the Howards, and to these, using the voice directly, he showed such a fullness of private remembrance and specific knowledge and characteristic intellectual and emotional quality pertaining to G. P. that, though they had previously taken no interest in any branch of psychical research, they were unable to resist the conviction that they were actually conversing with their old friend G. P. And this conviction was strengthened by their later experiences. Not least important, at that time, was his anxiety about the disposal of a certain book and about certain specified letters which concern matters too private for publication. He was particularly desirous of convincing his father, who lived in Washington, that it was indeed G. P. who was communicating, and he soon afterwards stated that his father had taken his photograph to be copied, as was the case, though Mr. Pelham had not informed even his wife of this fact. Later on he reproduced a series of incidents, unknown to the sitters, in which Mrs. Howard had been engaged in her own home. Later still, at a sitting with his father and mother in New York, a

further intimate knowledge was shown of private family circumstances, and at the following sitting, at which his father and mother were not present, he gave details of certain private actions which they had done in the interim. At their sitting, and at various sittings of the Howards, appropriate comments were made concerning different articles presented which had belonged to G. P. living, or had been familiar to him; he enquired after other personal articles, which were not presented at the sittings, and showed intimate and detailed recollections of incidents in connection with them. In points connected with the recognition of articles with their related associations of a personal sort, the G. P. communicating, so far as I know, has never failed. Nor has he failed in the recognition of personal friends. I may say generally that out of a large number of sitters who went as strangers to Mrs. Piper, the communicating G. P. has picked out the friends of G. P. living, precisely as the G. P. living might have been expected to do, and has exhibited memories in connection with these and other friends which are such as would naturally be associated as part of the G. P. personality, which certainly do not suggest in themselves that they originate otherwise, and which are accompanied by the emotional relations which were connected with such friends in the mind of G. P. living. At one of his early communications G. P. expressly undertook the task of rendering all the assistance in his power towards establishing the continued existence of himself and other communicators, in pursuance of a promise of which he himself reminded me, made some two years or more before his death, that if he died before me and found himself 'still existing', he would devote himself to proving the fact, and in the persistence of his endeavour to overcome the difficulties in communicating as far as possible, in his

constant readiness to act as amanuensis at the sittings, in the effect which he has produced by his counsels, to myself as investigator, and to numerous other sitters and communicators, he has, in so far as I can form a judgment in a problem so complex and still presenting so much obscurity, displayed all the keenness and pertinacity which were eminently characteristic of G. P. living.

"Finally, the manifestations of this G. P. communicating have not been of a fitful and spasmodic nature; they have exhibited the marks of a continuous living and persistent personality, manifesting itself through a course of years, and showing the same characteristics of an independent intelligence whether friends of G. P. were present at the sittings or not."

This is the sort of evidence which, at its best, is probably the most convincing kind which we can hope to get. It is difficult to convey in a printed record the weight which personal reactions and peculiarities would convey to an intimate friend.

Considering the hypothesis of telepathy between the living as explanatory of all these data, Hodgson says :

"At the same time, if the information given at the sittings, both in matter and form, was limited by the knowledge possessed by the sitters, we should have no hesitation in supposing that it was derived from their minds, telepathically or otherwise; but enough examples are cited in this report alone to show that the information given is not so limited. We must then make the arbitrary suppositions that Mrs. Piper's personality gets into relation with the minds of distant living persons, (1) who are intimate friends of the sitters at the time of the sitting, and (2) who are scarcely known, or not at all known, to

the sitter. And many of these distant living persons had, so far as they knew, never been near Mrs. Piper. These cases then compel us to assume a selective capacity in Mrs. Piper's percipient personality, and not only selective as to the occurrences themselves, but discriminative as to the related persons; that is to say, attaching the various pieces of knowledge respectively to the fictitious personalities whom, if real and living, the events in question would have concerned. If now we widen this supposed percipient personality of Mrs. Piper, and differentiate its parts so as to cover all the various successes of the communicators described in this report, with the verisimilitudes of the different personalities of the 'deceased', and so as to cover also all the types of confusion and failure, and so as to allow for the yet increasing number of new communicators, we reach a conception which goes as far as the 'spirit' hypothesis itself."

Dr. Hodgson sums up his position by saying :

"At the present time I cannot profess to have any doubt but that the chief communicators to whom I have referred in the foregoing pages are veritably the personalities that they claim to be, that they have survived the change we call death, and that they have directly communicated with us whom we call living through Mrs. Piper's entranced organism."

Mrs. Sidgwick in her long review and critical analysis of the whole of the Piper phenomena is by no means favourable to this conclusion. She entertains no doubt whatever that Mrs. Piper's trance utterances show a good deal of parnormally acquired knowledge, but takes the view that neither controls nor communicators were spirits independent of Mrs. Piper's organism, but were dramatised phases of her



own consciousness. When all the "rubbish" of trance revelation is brought together and examined, any critically minded person must undoubtedly feel misgiving. We find absurd impersonations like that of Julius Cæsar, Moses (of the Old Testament), "Imperator", who poses as an exalted spirit and talks with vagueness and immaturity. The other controls regard him as exalted; in other words, the existence of false communicators or controls is not admitted by any of them. One may be disposed therefore to say that their nature and origin is the same. If we are satisfied about the absurdity of some of them, what reliable criterion have we got for making distinctions? Mrs. Sidgwick says :

"Of course communication with the dead, when it occurs, must imply a real communicator in the background, but the point is that this does not necessitate either the dramatic communicator or the control being other than phases or elements of Mrs. Piper. Nor does it exclude the possibility that the dramatic communicator is a fiction, or a dream, or an hallucination of the control, each of which things it sometimes appears to be. That it is with phases or elements—centres of consciousness—of Mrs. Piper and not with entities independent of her that the sitter is in direct communication, seems to me . . . the hypothesis which best fits the facts so far as we know them."

Mrs. Sidgwick draws an analogy with the hypnotic state in which a person by suggestion can be made to impersonate others. She considers that a level in Mrs. Piper which may be called the "hypnotic self" impersonates the various characters. Mrs. Sidgwick does not deny the possibility of veridical communication with the "dead", but says :

"If the whole dramatic form were play-acting it might still be the framework in which veridical communications

come to us. In fact, the question of what is the nature of the communicator as dramatically presented to us is distinct from the question whether there is any real communicator in the background. A real communicator—say, G. P.—might be the source of information displayed, and even the model for its dramatic presentation, without being either an actor in the drama presented to us or in any way responsible for it.”

It cannot be pretended that this is a satisfactory state in which to leave the subject. Two very competent observers are not by any means in agreement. Forty years later we are still not in a position to present with confidence more reliable views. Professor William James, who studied the Hodgson control of Mrs. Piper, believed that the process was more complex than that involved in the terms “control” and “communicator”. He wrote :

“Extraneous ‘wills-to-communicate’ may contribute to the results, as well as a ‘will-to-personate’, and the two kinds of will may be distinct in entity, though capable of helping each other out. The will-to-communicate in our present instance would be, on a *prima facie* view of it, the will of Hodgson’s surviving spirit; and it can make fragmentary gleams and flashes of what it wishes to say mix with the rubbish of the trance talk on this side. The two wills might thus strike up a sort of partnership and reinforce each other. It might even be that the will-to-personate would be comparatively inert unless it were aroused to activity by the other will. . . .”

I have dealt at some length with Mrs. Piper’s mediumship because it was studied over so many years by persons of outstanding ability. It will show the reader how complex is the structure and functioning of the human mind, and how little we yet know about it. It will show him how

naïve are the assumptions of popular spiritualism—that communication with the “dead” is quite easy and straightforward. Yet I think it will also suggest to him that the possibility of communication—occasionally of a convincing kind—is there.

#### Mrs. WILLETT'S MEDIUMSHIP

Mrs. Willett's mediumship is of quite a different kind, in that she retains during the process a consciousness of self. In 1908, when Mrs. Willett started to experiment, the phenomenon was automatic script in which her hand appeared to her to be controlled by some external influence. This influence purported to be sometimes F. W. H. Myers and sometimes Edmund Gurney, two of the distinguished scholars who prior to their death had been closely linked with the Society for Psychical Research. Early in 1909 Mrs. Willett developed a different technique, which might be described as a clair-audient perception of the thoughts of the communicators. These she either wrote down at the time (naturally, not automatically) or spoke aloud for someone else to write down. Myers wrote, shortly after the inception of this phase :

“I am trying experiments with you to make you hear without writing. . . . Do not analyse whence these impressions (which I shall in future refer to as Daylight Impressions) come from; they are parts of a psychic education framed by me for you. . . .”

Mrs. Willett herself wrote about her feelings thus :

“I got no impression of appearance, only character, and in some way voice or pronunciation (though this doesn't mean that my ears hear, you know !). That is always so in D.I. (i.e. Daylight Impressions). I don't feel a sense of 'seeing' but an intense sense of personality, like a blind

person perhaps might have—and of inflections, such as amusement or emotion on the part of the speaker. If you asked me *how* I know when E. G. is speaking and not F. W. H. M., I can't exactly define, except that to me it would be impossible to be in doubt one instant—and with E. G. I often know he is there a second or two before he speaks. . . . I then sometimes speak first. . . . To me, by now, there isn't anything strange in D.I.s except when I try to explain anything about them; then I realise suddenly they are unusual! But otherwise it gives me no more sense of oddness to be talking to these invisible people than it does to be talking to my son, for instance. But I don't think I mentally visualise any sort of 'appearance' with regard to them—it is as 'minds' and 'characters' that they are to me, and yet *not at all* intangible or not-solid realities. . . ."

In the later phase of Mrs. Willett's mediumship where a "sitter" was present, some automatic script might introduce the topic and D.I.s, naturally spoken, would follow. There was undoubtedly a state of trance of varying depth, but the phenomena were in notable contrast with Mrs. Piper's. There were no "controls" or impersonations. Mrs. Willett was self-consciously in direct touch with the communicators, and occasionally made her own comments on the messages she was asked to transmit. The number of persons who purport to have communicated through her constitute the small group Myers, Gurney, Sidgwick, Butcher, and Verrall, who were all closely linked in the Society for Psychical Research when on earth. Two others communicated, but their names are not given. Furthermore, the sitters with Mrs. Willett have been very limited. They included Sir Oliver Lodge, Lord Balfour, Mrs. Verrall, Mrs. Sidgwick, and a few others.

The general character of the communications—or at least

of those which have been made public—were not directed towards proofs of identity or the recall of personal memories so much as to philosophical and psychological matters, to the mechanism of communication, and the problems of mediumship. I transcribe a few examples (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XLIII, p. 160) :

E. Gurney : "There is an awful danger in your thinking, a heap of you, that the learning stage is so much over now that you can think you have precedents, can lay down rules, and that sensitives can be standardised. Whereas, as a matter of fact, there are many varieties, and you can't lay down canons, you can't bring them up to a standard. You still have much to learn, so have we. . . ."

F. W. H. Myers : "Say this The Ideal is the Real. What men call Visionary is the Bare *Fact*. What they call *fact* is often evanescent vapour which will melt into nothingness before the light of Truth. I yearn to say the bare bones are the unreal, the Magic Vision Holy Grail is the Actual. I am feeling after much that is yet obscure to me. My knowledge is fragmentary and as I progress I feel its limits more. . . ."

Some of the passages dealing with psychological matters convey very clearly the sense of another mind trying to communicate difficult ideas in which Mrs. Willett herself had no interest. The following extract is Edmund Gurney answering a question of G. W. Balfour : "Are the centres of consciousness of the subliminal related to each other in a manner analogous to the relation of the subliminal to the supraliminal?"

"Wait. Something about centres of cognition. He says tentacles of the star-fish. Interaction, he says, is right. The supraliminal and the subliminal ebb and flow; and he says that the profundities of the subliminal which grade

right up and merge into what I've spoken of as the transcendental self, the central unity, the self-conscious whole achieving its self-consciousness by the hemming off. But, he says, if you're going to confuse any of this with the whole question of secondary and tertiary personalities and their respective memories of each other, you'd be making a mistake. These are cases of dislocation, imperfect and often pathological. Oh, he says, It's the creak of the machine, that. But, he says, the subliminal—he says the supraliminal—has access to—he says to me: You've got the analogies all wrong, try again. Begin the other end, he says. The transcendental self—he says something about a point of release—*Oh, Edmund, you do bore me so*—the passing of itself into stratas of subliminality—he says it's like a continuous impetus, like waves of sound. *Bang* (here hand came down on the table with a thump); and then the subliminal rippling out into the supraliminal", etc., etc.

The reader may begin to share something of the boredom of Mrs. Willett if the extract is further prolonged. It illustrates, however, that we are here dealing with matters of interest to scholars and not to Mrs. Willett; and it is difficult not to believe that their origin is the one which it purports to be.

Lord Balfour himself says with regard to this subject :

"It would be impossible to do justice to the argument in favour of spirit communication on the basis of the Willett phenomena without violating confidences which I am bound to respect. . . . If I had before me only those Willett scripts to which I have been referring, I frankly admit that I should have been at a loss whether to attribute them to subliminal activity or to a source entirely outside the personality of the medium. . . . But having before me

the whole of the Willett scripts, and being in a position to compare them with the scripts of other automatists of our group and with facts known to me but not known to Mrs. Willett herself, I am personally of opinion that they contain evidence of supernormally acquired knowledge which no mere subliminal mentation will suffice to account for."

### SOME OTHER MEDIUMS

If there were space to do so, the mediumship of Mrs. Osborne Leonard could be reviewed, as worthy to rank with that of Mrs. Piper and Mrs. Willett. The late Rev. C. Drayton Thomas made a prolonged study of Mrs. Leonard's mediumship, as the result of which he became a convinced spiritualist. He has given the evidence in support of his views in several books and papers in the *Proc. S.P.R.* I propose here to mention only one aspect of his investigation of Mrs. Leonard's mediumship—usually called proxy sittings. (See *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XLI, p. 139; Vol. XLIII, p. 439.) From what has been said already, it will be understood that the exercise of  $\psi$ -faculty (particularly telepathy) by the medium is the only alternative to the view that discarnate minds are in communication. In proxy sittings with a medium, the person in the medium's presence attends on behalf of someone else, and conveys the evidence to them afterwards. This procedure would appear to render much less plausible the hypothesis that the medium is drawing the information from others' minds. On the other hand, one cannot affirm that this is impossible, for the exercise of  $\psi$ -faculty could presumably derive from the mind of the sitter knowledge of the person on whose behalf he has come.

I shall briefly mention a few other examples of mediumship—not because of their intrinsic importance, but because they indicate the strange variety of data to be explained. In

1923 Mrs. Travers-Smith and a Mr. V. did automatic writing in which Mr. V. held the pencil but was "activated" by Mrs. Travers-Smith placing her fingers lightly on his hand (*Psychic Messages from Oscar Wilde*: HESTER TRAVERS-SMITH. T. W. Laurie Ltd., 1924). There were marked resemblances to Oscar Wilde's handwriting in the first script received, and these became even more marked in subsequent scripts. Mr. V. was not aware of having ever seen any of Wilde's handwriting, and he did not see any until the scripts were complete except a facsimile reproduction of seven words which appeared in a review about the middle of his script writing. Mrs. Travers-Smith was also ignorant of his handwriting when the first script came, but looked up some of it following the first script. (See *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 186.) In contrast with this type of control, it was remarked by Lord Balfour that Mrs. Willett's automatic script was at the commencement of a sitting different from her normal handwriting, but that it bore no resemblance to that of the "communicators". As the trance deepened the transition to a handwriting very similar to her normal handwriting took place. Facts such as these are not easy to explain. To describe handwriting as a psycho-physical habit-pattern tells us nothing, and any understanding must await the accumulation of much more data. If the hypnotic self can impersonate numerous characters, it would be interesting to study its capacity for sustained imitation of handwritings which the waking self has seen for various lengths of time.

Another extraordinary phenomenon of mediumistic trance is xenoglossy, i.e. the intelligent use of a foreign tongue with which the medium has no waking familiarity. In his book, *Psychic Adventures in New York*, Dr. Neville Whymant, an authority on Oriental languages, has given an account of numerous séances with the medium George



Valiantine, a relatively uneducated man. In twelve séances he had heard fourteen foreign languages used, including Chinese, Hindi, Persian, Basque, Sanskrit, Arabic, Portuguese, Italian, Yiddish, German, and modern Greek. On one of these occasions the Chinese spoken was not a living language but the archaic style of the Confucian period. An ode, of which Dr. Whyment says he could remember only one line and of which the meaning had never been understood by Chinese scholars, was declaimed in such a manner that new light was thrown upon it. This is certainly a very subtle and impressive feature if we can accept the data as factual. Speech, in the sense of pronunciation, is perhaps another psycho-physical habit-pattern, but understanding is wholly psychical. If understanding of an ode was not present in Dr. Whyment's subconscious mind, whence came the new light upon its meaning?

Readers who are intrigued by this type of data will also find the book *Ancient Egypt Speaks* by Hulme and Wood a source of similar data. Here "Nona", the control of a medium called Rosemary, has apparently provided information of the pronunciation of Egyptian vowels (hitherto unknown) as spoken in Egypt over 3,000 years ago. Indeed, Dr. Wood says: "Nona's Egyptian is as fluent and easy as my command of English. Moreover it is consistent."

There is one other extraordinary example of mediumship which provides similar problems, and which has been studied by several competent scholars. I refer to *The Case of Patience Worth*, by Dr. W. F. Prince, and *Patience Worth—a Psychic Mystery*, by C. S. Yost. Professor Schiller of Oxford has also written about it (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXVI). The medium was Mrs. J. H. Curran of St. Louis, U.S.A., who in trance was controlled by "Patience Worth". She claimed to be a girl who had lived in Dorsetshire in the seventeenth century, had later emigrated to America, and

had been killed by Indians. Among several works considered by experts to have considerable literary merit is a poem, *Telka*, of about 70,000 words, in blank verse. It was dictated with great rapidity in the Anglo-Saxon dialect of three centuries ago. Analysis of the language shows its vocabulary to be 90 per cent. of Anglo-Saxon origin and that it contains no word of later entry into the language than 1600 (except "amuck", which is early seventeenth century). Professor Schiller comments :

"When we are told further that the Authorised Version has only 77 per cent. of Anglo-Saxon, and that it is necessary to go back to Layamon (1205) to equal Patience Worth's percentage, we realise that we are face to face with a philological miracle."

These are some of the strange, if rare, phenomena of mediumship. If they are not the activity of discarnate minds, it is difficult to find any satisfactory hypothesis short of some universal psychic record or collective memory from which wonders of all kinds can be drawn by the mind of a medium suitably related to it. When we are driven to a postulate of this comprehensiveness it would seem more reasonable to consider the claim made by the control. This does not imply that we need accept claims made by all mediumistic controls ! I should personally accept the claim of G. P. (in Mrs. Piper's trance); I am uncertain about one or two; and I reject the claims of most of the others. In particular, I endorse the views of Professor William James. In this strange and varied field where a blend of both restraint and boldness is required in the theorist, we may make many mistakes if we adopt the attitude of either/or in our thinking. Our knowledge of the vagaries and depths of the human personality is as yet pathetically small. We must collect more and more data, study them with vigilance, and recognise

that we are dealing with a subject which in millenniums to come will still be a matter for man's most earnest enquiry.

*Books for Further Reading*

1. *This World and That*: PAYNE and BENDIT (Faber & Faber, 1950).

2. *Evidence of Purpose*: ZOË RICHMOND (G. Bell & Sons, 1938).

3. *Evidence of Identity*: KENNETH RICHMOND (G. Bell & Sons, 1939).

4. *Evidence of Personal Survival from Cross-Correspondence*: H. F. SALTMARSH (G. Bell & Sons. 1928).

## CHAPTER IX

### THE PROBLEM OF SURVIVAL

STRICTLY speaking, the issue of the survival by human personality of the change which we call death is not one with which psychical research is principally concerned. It is, however, for most people one of profound interest at some stage of their life, and the data of psychical research have very great relevance to the issue. It is therefore appropriate to consider it here.

#### THE MEANING OF SURVIVAL

If I make the statement "I expect to survive the death of my body", it will be obvious that I have already formed a conception of myself as distinct from my body. My body, after all, is a physical object among myriads of others in our familiar physical world. It is certainly a very complicated one, but the chemist would assure me that it could ultimately be broken down into molecules and atoms and other smaller particles, and the philosopher would assure me that it is an assemblage of sense-data like other physical objects, and that even its appearance at all is dependent on a perceiving mind. Materialism in the old sense—that matter is the one fundamental thing, that when it reaches a certain chemical complexity it miraculously produces life and mind which are essentially dependent phenomena—such materialism is completely moribund. I have expressed elsewhere (*The Imprisoned Splendour*. Hodder & Stoughton, 1953) my conviction that the self is a hierarchy; that mind and body are two different instruments of the self for contacting different orders of reality, and that of these two, mind is the

more fundamental and significant. When I refer to my survival of death, I mean merely that I shall some day discard as no longer serviceable this outermost vehicle or instrument. Another vehicle or instrument of myself, which I at present possess but do not consciously use, then becomes my outer or objective expression on a level of reality to which it inherently belongs. Glimpses of its existence are found in accounts of out-of-the-body experiences.

In this chapter we shall concern ourselves with the evidence that mind, and that which uses mind, continues to function after the body is discarded.

#### WHAT WOULD CONSTITUTE PROOF?

It would be an appropriate exercise for those of us who are interested in this subject to write down on paper a list of those criteria which, if fulfilled, would be regarded as proof of the survival of a personal friend. It is only when we have formulated this that it is possible to consider how far evidence has been obtained, or could be obtained, to satisfy all these criteria. Suppose we are told that a friend of ours is on the far side of an impenetrable opaque screen which, although it distorts the voice, still permits of conversation. Could we satisfy ourselves of the truth of the statement? My answer would be "yes". (1) I should depend upon shared memories which I believed were unknown to any other persons. (2) I should bring along other persons who also knew my friend, and see if he could sustain with them a conversation typical of their past relationship and shared interests. (3) I should recognise certain mannerisms and characteristics—not merely psycho-physical things like pitch of voice, accent, or inflexion of speech—but eagerness or slowness, cheerfulness or gloominess, wit or solemnity, the type of his interests, the quality of his mind, the inter-mingling of emotional tones, and most important, the qualities of

character which express his moral sense and insight and the sensitivity of his perceptions. There are a hundred such factors which normally we do not sit down and analyse, but which in their total effect can be convincing proof of identity to oneself. It might well be, however, that our own conviction would fail to impress others.

The situation in regard to survival of death is not quite so simple, because the medium through whom communication is possible is not merely an impersonal screen, but is liable to add to, subtract from, and otherwise colour the alleged communications. Nevertheless, although with greater difficulty, personal conviction can be obtained, and has in fact been obtained by critical and responsible persons. Although others' conviction must undoubtedly carry weight with the seeker after truth, the question still remains: "Is there any objective proof of survival possible, apart from the personal satisfaction which may arise through experience such as we have outlined?"

Any objective evidence has necessarily to be confronted with what we know of the para-normal powers of the mind by way of gathering knowledge. This is where the difficulty arises. Knowledge alone, however remarkable, surprising, and intimate, is not theoretically beyond the power of ingathering by  $\psi$ -faculty exercised by a good medium. On the other hand, let us remember that the human personality is not merely a reservoir of memories, but can exercise and demonstrate faculties of will, purpose, and planning. Where an unknown personality breaks through into a séance to convey evidence of identity of itself which can subsequently be verified by devious means, this is certainly interesting; where, in addition, it shows evidence of independent purpose and intention quite outside the range of interests and purposes of the medium and sitters, this is an important feature which has to be explained. This sort of activity, showing

purpose and intention—whether it be in small matters, as of a deceased soldier who wants a keepsake given to his fiancée who is not known by others to exist—or whether it be an erudite classical essay, fragments of which are conveyed through several different mediums—this sort of activity can be excellent evidence of an independent mind at work. If it is not the discarnate mind which it purports to be, then whose mind is it?

We shall find, if we are determined to be sceptical about survival, that every case which can be cited is capable of an explanation along the lines of the use of the mind's paranormal powers by a living person—provided we extend them widely enough. In some instances it would seem to me that the hypothesis of communication by a surviving discarnate personality is *much* the more probable explanation, but this is where judgments will differ and each person must form his own.

#### EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY

It is perhaps appropriate to cite one or two examples which will illustrate the statements we have made. In cases given below, the knowledge presented by the medium was not drawn from the sitter's mind. Where the possibility of this exists, we cannot consider the case as contributing to *proof* of survival in view of our knowledge of  $\psi$ -faculty.

*Case of Ruth Robertshaw* (from *Psychical Investigations*, p. 172 : J. ARTHUR HILL. Cassell, 1917) :

J. A. Hill had numerous sittings with a non-professional medium called Wilkinson, for whose honesty he vouches. In a sitting on November 9th, 1916, the following conversation took place :

*Medium*: Did you know someody called Ruth Robertshaw? R.U.T.H.

7. *A. H.*: I don't remember anybody at the moment.

*Medium*: About sixty-three or sixty-four. She has known somebody who has been here. "Ruth Robertshaw" is not a common combination. I saw her perfectly. A crescent-shaped light was over her head and her face was illumined. She would be inclined to be rather pious in her way.

7. *A. H.*: Quite meaningless to me. Never heard of any Ruth Robertshaw.

*Medium*: This woman Ruth is no relation to you, I think. . . . There was a gentleman belonging to her called Jacob. I think he would be her husband. Whoever he was, he was older than her. He would be seventy-three. She would be about ten years younger; it may be in the time between them passing away—I'm not sure. I don't see him; I only hear it.

Mr. Hill says all this meant nothing to him, but that it occurred to him to write to a friend, Miss North, who had been a visitor to the house three days before, and ask if it meant anything to her. She replied :

"You make me feel creepy. Ruth Robertshaw was my father's cousin—one of the sweetest women that ever lived. She was a beautiful old lady when I knew her, and *good*. Jacob was her husband. The ages given are just about right."

Mr. Hill says that correct statements were also made from the Robertshaws about a family known to them but unknown to him. Mr. Hill was confident that the medium did not know of Miss North's existence. The number of her visits to see Mr. Hill were estimated at about three per year.

This is rather interesting as a case. The alternative explanation to the spiritistic one is that at a subconscious level



the minds of Mr. Hill and Miss North were in some measure of relationship, and when Mr. Wilkinson achieved rapport with Mr. Hill he *ipso facto* could use  $\psi$ -faculty to draw knowledge from her mind. It is not, however, as though Mr. Hill had a proxy-sitting with Mr. Wilkinson on behalf of Miss North. The initiative appears to have been with the discarnate Mrs. Robertshaw.

*Case of F. and Madame Elise (Proc. S.P.R., Vol. XIII, p. 378) :*

Dr. Richard Hodgson records this case without, however, as much detail as one would wish. He was going one morning to a sitting with Mrs. Piper, and observed in the Boston morning paper a notice of the death of F., who was a near relative of Madame Elise. This lady had been a friend of Dr. Hodgson when alive, and had communicated with him through Mrs. Piper on several occasions in a convincing manner. On this occasion, without any anticipation of it, Dr. Hodgson says that the first writing that came through was from Madame E., who said that F. was there with her but unable to communicate yet. She described how she had been present at the death-bed of F. and repeated what she had "said" to him—which Hodgson describes as "an unusual form of expression". She said he had heard and recognised her. Hodgson gave to an intimate friend (who was also a friend of the closest surviving relative of F.) an account of this sitting, and this relative a day or two later spontaneously told their mutual friend that F., when dying, had said that Madame E. was speaking to him and repeated what she said. The expression so repeated was identical with that told to Hodgson by Madame Elise.

This is an interesting grouping of facts, most simply explained on the basis above described. Indeed,  $\psi$ -faculty would have to be stretched to an extraordinary extent to try to account plausibly for these facts.

A different type of evidence which was specifically designed to establish identity was undertaken by a group of American investigators. They used a simple technique based upon the para-normal P.K. effect of a tilting table. The alphabet was recited and the tilting table came to rest at a certain letter which was recorded. This was a slow method of communication in which each letter of every word had to be received. In the course of 18 sittings 41 communicators "came through", and provided information about themselves which members of the group took steps to verify. An example of this is given below :

"The name 'Slane . . . Frederic' was given on February 15th, 1932. The communicator stated that he was a doctor, lived at Waterford, Ontario, Canada; that he left Dorothea, and two children, a boy Fred, and a girl Frances. Search was made in the Central Library, New York, and a newspaper notice was found—'Slane, Frederic H., M.D., February 1st, at Waterford, Ontario, Canada : husband of Dorothea T. Selby. Funeral and interment at Waterford, Ontario, Canada.' "

Out of 156 statements made about these cases, 105 were checked up and found correct. Of the remaining 51, lack of sufficient information prevented 35 being checked. The cumulative effect of this type of investigation is impressive. Clairvoyance, and a faculty of telepathy which can sweep like a searchlight into the odd corners of libraries and gather information which is almost always right, is certainly a possible hypothesis. But is it comparable in its plausibility with the ostensible one which presumes the survival of personality? If  $\psi$ -faculty of this quality is available through a table and an ordinary group of investigators—none of whom were aware of exercising such remarkable extra-sensory powers—we can only say that every reputable library ought

to have its "tilting table" as well as its catalogue. Every foreign office and intelligence department, every police headquarters and every defence department, should have its séance room. Why worry about security if the most recondite facts and secret processes are open to this type of "clairvoyant" acquisition? We cannot help but think that there is a disposition on the part of some commentators to extend the range of  $\psi$ -faculty and the measure of its precision far beyond the point where experiment shows it to be, in an effort to avoid the hypothesis of survival.

#### EVIDENCE OF PURPOSE

I shall select two examples only out of the hundreds of recorded cases in which planning or purpose of some mind other than that of the medium or sitters is indicated.

*The Pearl Tie-pin Case* (see *Voices from the Void*: HELEN TRAVERS-SMITH. Rider & Co.):

Mrs. Travers-Smith was the medium, who used a ouija board as a means of communication. Miss C., who was with her, had heard of the death of a cousin who was an officer in the British Army in France about a month prior to this sitting. The board first spelled out the name of Miss C.'s cousin, and then in reply to the question "Do you know who I am?" gave her own name. The following message was then transmitted: "Tell mother to give my pearl tie-pin to the girl I intended to marry. I think she should have it." The full name of this lady was then given, and the surname is described as very uncommon and not the name of anyone known either to the medium or Miss C. A London address was given, but as a letter addressed there was returned, it was thought that either a mistake had occurred or that the whole thing was fictitious, and no further steps were taken. About six months later, however, the War Office forwarded

the officer's effects to his family in Ireland, and among these was discovered a pearl tie-pin. In his will was given the lady's name in full (as had been mentioned at the sitting). Neither his own family nor Miss C. had even heard of this lady's name, still less knew of his engagement to her shortly before he went out to France. Sir William Barrett received a written assurance from Mrs. Travers-Smith and Miss C. that the message received was written down at the time of the sitting and not afterwards.

*The Chaffin Will Case:*

This is a much-quoted case (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXVI, p. 517), and is given below in a very condensed form. As a lawsuit was involved, the facts were subject to careful scrutiny and testing.

A farmer, James L. Chaffin, who lived in North Carolina, made a will on November 16th, 1905, in which he gave the farm to his third son Marshall, leaving his widow and other three sons unprovided for. On January 16th, 1919, he apparently repented of this and made a second will, which was unwitnessed, but which would, according to the state law, have been valid provided there was proof that it was in the testator's own handwriting. The new will read as follows :

"After reading the 27th Chapter of Genesis, I, James L. Chaffin, do make my last will and testament and here it is. I want, after giving my body a decent burial, my little property to be equally divided between my four children, if they are living at my death, both personal and real estate divided equal if not living, give share to their children . . . etc."

He placed this second will between two pages of an old family Bible which had belonged to his father, folding the pages over so as to mark the place. No one knew of the

existence of the second will, and the eccentric farmer took no steps to indicate its existence except that of stitching up the inner pocket of his overcoat with a roll of paper inside it bearing the words : "Read the 27th Chapter of Genesis in my daddie's old Bible." This posthumous treasure-hunt did not apparently eventuate after the old farmer's sudden death on September 27th, 1921. The third son Marshall obtained probate of the only known will—the first one—on September 24th of that year. In June 1925 the second son James started to have vivid dreams of his father. In one of these he appeared to stand at his son's bedside wearing his black overcoat and to say to him : "You will find my will in my overcoat pocket." Being convinced by this, James visited his brother John, who lived twenty miles away and had taken possession of the coat. On discovering the roll of paper with its message, James went with his daughter and two other witnesses to his mother's home. They found the old Bible after considerable search and the second will at the place indicated. In December 1925 a lawsuit took place, and the second will was admitted to probate.

Commenting on this : the period of three-and-three-quarter years which elapsed between the farmer's death and the son's dreams makes most unlikely any explanation which assumes that the initiative was with the son James. If his subconscious mind, without any stimulus from the conscious mind, exercised  $\psi$ -faculty and found what his father had done (the dream-figure of the father being merely a constructed vehicle to convey the information), why did it wait nearly four years? The same pertinent question applies to any suggestion that the old farmer's intention leaked telepathically into his son's mind but remained there latent for this period. In my judgment the circumstances point to initiative by the surviving discarnate mind of the farmer.

## CROSS-CORRESPONDENCE

The evidence which is referred to as cross-correspondence is at once the most involved and perhaps the most weighty testimony to the existence of a discarnate mind, planning and carrying out over a period of years an experiment to demonstrate his survival. In the course of it he evinced a wealth of classical knowledge which makes the conclusion almost inevitable that F. W. H. Myers was in fact the author and experimenter—as he claimed to be. Myers died in 1901, and a few years later he purported to intimate in automatic script that he with his friends was initiating a new experiment. As an experienced worker in this field, he was fully aware of the nature of alternative hypotheses to survival, and the cross-correspondence scripts were an attempt to eliminate the plausibility of these. The idea briefly expressed is this. Suppose there were three mediums capable of writing automatic script. An essay might be composed by an independent (discarnate) mind and communicated through these three persons. If the same essay were communicated in its entirety through each of them working separately, this fact being unknown to them, there would certainly be a strong presumption of planning by an independent mind. The critic might suggest, however, that the essay arose in the mind of one of the automatists and was communicated telepathically to the minds of the others. If, however, certain fragments of the essay were communicated through one writer A, the other fragments through another writer C, while the key to relate these properly was communicated to B, we could no longer seriously consider the critic's hypothesis. The writings of A, B, and C could be forwarded by these persons to a common centre—say the Society for Psychical Research—and then careful study and synthesis would make a coherent essay. Each automatist

would receive strings of words and phrases and allusions, making no sense until they were properly related to the others. In his study of this subject, H. F. Saltmarsh has used the appropriate analogy of a jig-saw puzzle. One might imagine the jig-saw puzzle divided into three and given to three different people, so that until all three brought their fragments together the picture and design would not be apparent.

This is the "cross-correspondence" research which began three or four years after Myers died and continued for over a dozen years. It was made possible by the faculty of automatic writing possessed by Mrs. Verrall of Cambridge, Mrs. Holland (who lived for some time in India), Mrs. Willett, and to a subsidiary extent Mrs. Forbes, Miss H. Verrall, the "Macs", and Mrs. Piper. The scholars who examined the scripts and to whose labours we owe the possibility of forming a judgment upon them were Mr. J. G. Piddington, the Earl of Balfour (G. W.), Sir Oliver Lodge, Mrs. Sidgwick, Miss Alice Johnson, and Mrs. Verrall. Most of these were themselves acquainted with classical scholarship—an important qualification in the unravelling of some of the ingenious puzzles presented by the automatists.

I shall not add to the length of this chapter with illustrations, but the real weight of evidence can be appreciated only if some of the original papers in the *Proc. S.P.R.*, or a book such as that of H. F. Saltmarsh, is carefully studied.

There is only one hypothesis which might be considered at all as an alternative to the view that the surviving minds of Myers, Sidgwick, and others were responsible for the scripts. Mrs. Verrall was herself a classical scholar, and it has been suggested that some of these involved essays (with many classical allusions) originated in her subconscious mind, and that selected fragments "leaked" telepathically to the

other automatists and were there "thrown up" into script. Apart from the fact that cross-correspondence did not cease in 1916 with the death of Mrs. Verrall, such a hypothesis attributes to the subconscious mind of Mrs. Verrall a capacity for scholarship, planning, and transmission of meaningless fragments which I think we have no justification for doing on any considered grounds. It is a suggestion as improbable as that the subconscious mind of Mrs. Curran was responsible for the philological miracle of "Patience Worth" (see p. 143).

#### SUMMING-UP

This can be done briefly, for I have sufficiently indicated the alternative explanations of psychical facts to allow the reader to form a judgment for himself. It is almost ironical that the labours of psychical research have enlarged our knowledge of the mind's powers, and by implication made the essential dependence of mind on matter seem less and less plausible. At the same time the very existence of these powers in us makes rigorous *proof* of the survival of discarnate minds difficult. To put it otherwise—whereas it was once supposed that such remarkable powers (of  $\psi$ -faculty) must establish the existence of a kind of superior discarnate state of being, we now rather ask ourselves by what sort of test can we hope to distinguish between  $\psi$ -faculty exercised by the discarnate and the incarnate? I am not sure that any such test can be invented, and, if so, rigorous proof of survival may not be possible. I do not think that for practical purposes this should cause us any concern. I should find it difficult to give convincing proof of my identity to a friend of mine in another country—if he was determined to be sceptical—to demonstrate that I was in fact the person he had known through his senses some years previously. Dr. R. H. Thouless has suggested (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XLVIII,



p. 342, 1948-9) that an encoded message with the type of cipher used should be published. Dr. Thouless has done this, and he hopes, if he finds himself surviving death, to communicate the keyword or words which will enable this message to be decoded. It is desirable of course that mediums should do what they can while Dr. Thouless is living to obtain these keywords. I personally believe that an automatic script writer known to me could obtain these keywords—but if so, how would she claim to do it? She would ask her “control” to recover these words from the mind of Dr. Thouless, and the “control” in turn might say: “I will call F. W. H. Myers (for example), who will be able to do this better than I can.” Suppose F. W. H. M. purported to communicate the keywords (which were correct), would this establish anything? There would still be sceptics who would say: “Good thought-reading by the medium—and of course the alleged F. W. H. M. is a vehicle created to convey the information in a dramatic form.”

My own considered view is this: that responsible individuals with caution and persistence can, and have, satisfied themselves of the survival by intimate friends of the death of the body. I confess that this is my own conviction in relation to an intimate friend of mine who died some ten years ago. I consider, however, that this kind of conviction is personal and cannot be handed on to others. When, however, we look at the issue of survival objectively, the cumulative evidence strongly supports the survival hypothesis as by far the most plausible. Words read to the Society for Psychical Research on behalf of Mrs. Sidgwick when she was elected President of Honour at the age of 87 are an appropriate summing up. Lord Balfour said:

“May I be allowed before we separate to add one or two sentences of my own? . . . Conclusive proof of survival is notoriously difficult to obtain. But the evidence

may be such as to produce *belief*, even though it falls short of conclusive proof. I have Mrs. Sidgwick's assurance—an assurance which I am permitted to convey to the meeting—that upon the evidence before her, she herself is a firm believer both in survival and in the reality of communication between the living and the dead.”

### THE CONCEPTION OF ANOTHER WORLD

Perhaps one of the main reasons why thoughtful people view with suspicion, or as a superstition, any talk of “another world” in which we may find ourselves after death, is the vagueness of current concepts about it. Some of the comments often proffered in this connection are these: “

(1) *Where* is this other world? You don't expect me to believe it is somewhere in the stratosphere in this scientific age?

(2) When we read spiritualists' accounts of trees and houses and countryside and familiar things, is it not obvious that this is a projected wish-fulfilment: an idealised version of the world we know?

(3) How trivial and banal are most of the supposed communications from the “other side”! Can you tell us of any substantial contribution to thought which has come through? One might have supposed that, assuming communication is possible, there would be enough of wonder and significance to unfold to us; but we either hear of trifles and commonplaces or listen to the conventional “uplift” talk which is the output of thousands of pulpits.

The first of these questions is a very reasonable one, and in an extremely interesting lecture (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. L, p. 1, 1953) Professor H. H. Price has dealt both with this and related matters. It is there shown that granted the next world is one of mental images, there will result by no means an unsubstantial or “unreal” world as some might suppose.

I am personally impressed with the close correspondence between the conception developed logically by Professor Price and the statements of the best communicators as to the nature of their world, as far as they have experienced it. Professor Price points out that in a dream one lives in a world of images which have shape and extension and spatial relations to each other. These spatial features have, however, no relationship to the space of which we become aware on waking. He says :

"It follows that when we speak of 'passing' from this world to the next, this passage is not to be thought of as any sort of movement in space. It should rather be thought of as a change of consciousness, analogous to the change which occurs when we pass from the waking experience to dreaming. It would be a change from the perceptual type of consciousness to another type of consciousness in which perception ceases and imaging replaces it. . . ."

If, as I believe, the so-called material world is a creation of Mind (with the ætheric world an intermediate creative stage), then it is on the level of Mind that the prototype of the material level exists. When a man no longer retains awareness of the material level, whether in sleep by a temporary inward withdrawal of consciousness, or whether by discarding his body at death, consciousness is refocused on an interior level, i.e. one which is a step nearer to the ultimately real. This new world-level then acquires objectivity for him.

The second question has been largely answered by what we have said. Speaking of the argument that the "materialistic" character of the communications is evidence against them (*loc. cit.*, p. 19) :

"Most people in this life do like material objects and are deeply interested in them. This may be deplorable, but

there it is. If so, the image world they would create for themselves in the next life might be expected to have just the 'materialistic' character of which these critics complain. If one had been fond of nice houses and pleasant gardens in this life, the image-world one would create for oneself in the next might be expected to contain image-replicas of such objects, and one would make these replicas as like 'the real thing' as one's memories permitted; with the help perhaps of telepathic influences from other minds whose tastes were similar."

Professor Price cogently pointed out that the issue of survival of death and of life in another world has nothing to do with our wishes; it is one of evidence. But granted the fact, then the nature of this world is likely to be very much influenced by our wishes. He says :

"There must surely be many next worlds . . . corresponding to the *different* desires which different groups of personalities have."

On the third question raised, I think there is a widespread but groundless presumption that ordinary mortals, once they throw off the limitations of the body, *ipso facto* should reveal surprisingly admirable and angelic properties. Presumably the environment effects this magical change! On the contrary, it is far more reasonable that human nature should remain essentially unchanged, with the mental and emotional content just as before. Ninety-five per cent. of human communications on our present level of existence are trifling and commonplace, and it should not be surprising that the same is true of mediumistic communication. On the other hand, it is not true that *all* communications are trifling. The Willett scripts dealt with the mechanism of communication and with metaphysical questions. Two books

of automatic script written by Miss Cummins and inspired by F. W. H. Myers deal with profound questions. Always, of course, there is the problem of language, with its inadequacy to convey concepts which no experience of ours can fill with significant content.

I think I might conclude the chapter with some words communicated by Myers through Mrs. Holland (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXI, p. 230) :

"The nearest simile I can find to express the difficulties of sending a message is that I appear to be standing behind a sheet of frosted glass which blurs sight and deadens sounds—dictating feebly to a reluctant and somewhat obtuse secretary."

But Myers also communicated through the same medium as follows :

"If it were possible for the soul to die back into earth again I should die from sheer yearning to reach you, to tell you that all we imagined is not half wonderful enough for the truth."

#### *Books for Further Reading*

1. *Evidence of Identity*: KENNETH RICHMOND (G. Bell & Sons, 1939).
2. *Evidence of Purpose*: ZOË RICHMOND (G. Bell & Sons, 1938).
3. *Evidence of Personal Survival from Cross-correspondence*: H. F. SALTMARSH (G. Bell & Sons, 1938).
4. *The Imprisoned Splendour* : R. C. JOHNSON (Hodder & Stoughton, 1953).
5. *Beyond Human Personality*: G. CUMMINS (Psychic Press Ltd., 1952).
6. *The Road to Immortality*: G. CUMMINS (L.S.A. Publications, 1947).

CHAPTER X  
THE IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHICAL  
RESEARCH

FOR SCIENCE : NEW LAWS AND ENERGIES

MODERN physics presents to the thoughtful person a spectacle of great interest. Those who have watched the probe of enquiry going deeper into atomic structure have seen a succession of "particles" come to light: electron, proton, neutron, meson—and have wondered if the process will stop. The term "particle" which at one time seemed to require no further definition then became ambiguous, and wave-groups took their place—but only sometimes. Faced with a fundamental dilemma of this kind, a new attitude was adopted. In thinking in terms of particles and waves, we were transferring our ideas of models and mechanics from the large-scale world, where their usefulness is unchallenged, to the microcosm where they apparently do not work consistently. When we ponder on this, let us ask ourselves whether we have any justification for talking about what an electron or proton *looks* like. We have no sense datum to correspond. The term is only a symbol, after all—and to try to visualise a model of it is a mental process making a concession to the primary importance for us of the visual type of sense-data. Models were therefore abandoned by advanced thinkers in physics, and a system of mathematical relations between unknown entities was considered to be all that was necessary. Does it not look as if both the relations and the entities are aspects of a mental field sustained by a cosmic mind with which our own finite minds, as we try to unravel these mysteries, are in rapport?

Again, consider the strange interchangeability of matter and radiation energy. We know to our cost today that what we call "matter" can disappear and "energy" can take its place. These two terms both describe mental concepts; in any proper sense they are unknowns. The substantiality of the world is far from being what our common sense suggests. It is another of those attributes which we have created to describe our sense-data.

The more we reflect upon the nature of the world which science investigates, the less justification there seems to be for the attitude of materialism which flourished so confidently during the last century. It is a quite unfounded assumption that Nature works within limits which she has already disclosed to us and which our senses have conveniently registered. On the contrary, the world which our minds recognise is only one significant world-level of many potential world-levels, and some of these, we claim, are disclosed in the data of psychical research. The minimum postulate which will help to account for these data is that of an ætheric world-level sustaining energies and forces whose very existence is as yet little recognised.

It may well be that what has been called  $\psi$ -faculty is the normal and characteristic faculty of mind when not geared closely to a physical body. The physical brain may normally be an organ of limitation. It canalises the sensory aspects of  $\psi$ -faculty through the special senses, and it canalises the motor aspects of  $\psi$ -faculty through the cerebro-spinal nervous system and the muscles. There is a fringe or slight residue of unchannelled  $\psi$ -faculty, which can be detected statistically by the experimental methods of psychical research. The marked and dramatic phenomena become evident, however, only when the mind and brain are uncoupled to a substantial extent, as in trance. Then we may have the surprising acquisition of knowledge which we label clair-

voyant or clair-audient, and the surprising movements and creations of objects such as have occurred, for example, in the presence of Stainton Moses and of other physical mediums. The brain has thus been described as an organ of attention to everyday life. If we ask ourselves what is gained by this attention to life and what end it subserves, we plunge into the deep waters of metaphysical speculation. I shall do no more here than suggest that this process of limitation serves the end of differentiating and establishing our finite minds from the matrix of the collective or racial (unconscious) mind. It is a process of individualisation of mind, in which, from a new centre, the nature of existence can be examined and enjoyed by an all-pervasive consciousness.

Of the laws of the ætheric world-level we can scarcely as yet claim to have any inkling. We are still in the process of collecting reliable data, and speculating as to how these varied observations may perhaps be related to each other. Consider for a moment Mind in its creative aspect. If I want to make a table I have to use an imaginative faculty to formulate the design. I then have to use my mind to direct and control my muscles, which, with the aid of tools and raw material, can shape and construct the table. There appears, however, to be possible another mode of construction, in which the mind can utilise directly the psychic æther—as in materialisation phenomena. Here the use of the muscles is not involved, but the end-product, while temporarily providing equivalent sense-data to the normal method, lacks permanence.

I cannot doubt, however, that the phenomena of growth in biology, and those characteristics of living things which remain completely outside the region of explanation in terms of physics and chemistry, will be profoundly illuminated by a fuller understanding of these strange materialisation phenomena disclosed by psychical research. G. N. M. Tyrrell



has reminded us in his *Grades of Significance* that an attempt to understand the phenomena of any significant level in terms of a lower level is doomed to failure, but that when we approach from the higher level real understanding is possible. It is because this world-level of the psychic æther is a bridge between what we commonly call matter and mind—and is therefore just one step nearer to the Real—that I advocate its study, believing that it has essential clues to offer to a fuller understanding of the world around us.

Within the limits of a book such as this, it has been necessary to select for exposition the best explored paths into this territory. It goes without saying that there are scores of phenomena which are proper material for psychical research which it has been necessary to exclude. Dowsing, for example, whether it be adapted to finding water, minerals, or oil, or a diseased organ of the body, seems to be substantially an example of the mind's clairvoyant faculty in action. The use of a twig or piece of wire or a pendulum held in the hands would then be regarded as a convenient conventional indicator to the conscious mind of knowledge which the subconscious mind is able to acquire through its  $\psi$ -faculty. There *may* be types of energy radiation on the ætheric level of a specific character to which the ætheric body of the dowser is a sensitive receiver. These are apparently accepted as factual, and are being studied under the general title of radiesthesia by people in different parts of the world.<sup>1</sup> Such radiations of an ætheric type *may* exist, and it is desirable that proof or disproof of their existence should be secured by a responsible trustworthy body such as the Society for Psychical Research. At present, claims are put forward on the strength of evidence which is far from convincing to the scientific mind. In so strange and novel a field as this, every

<sup>1</sup> E.g. The Medical Society for the Study of Radiesthesia, 4 Wimpole Mews, London, W.1.

observation should be repeated many times and corroborated by many observers, and in particular it should be demonstrated that well-established  $\psi$ -faculty is unequal to accounting for the facts.

It will be a misfortune if conservative science remains aloof and indifferent much longer to what can now be regarded as the thoroughly tested and well-established data of para-psychology. It will, on the other hand, be a misfortune, if on the expanding frontier of enquiry in this region, a pseudo-science grows up, comprising fantastic hypotheses and insufficiently tested data of observation.

#### FOR MEDICINE : NEW METHODS OF DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

It will be clear that the zone or level between the mental and the material, which in this book we have labelled ætheric, must be one of great importance to physical health. If the psychic æther, which we have postulated, is modified by matter on the one hand and mind on the other, it is only to be expected that a complex organised ætheric vehicle or body may exist as a part of man himself. There is a long-standing tradition of this, and many sensitives have described in some detail their "clairvoyant" perception of its character and functioning. It is described, for example, as giving rise to an aura surrounding the physical body, which it interpenetrates completely, although it extends a little beyond its limits. This aura is said to vary in its character and texture with physical health, and to be substantially modified where a physical organ is diseased. Such statements should be capable of verification by research collaboration between a good clairvoyant and a medical practitioner. Care would need to be taken to exclude telepathy between the two collaborators, but if the facts are substantiated clair-

voyance on this level, i.e. of the ætheric body, should be a valuable aid in diagnosis.

Clairvoyants say that there are types of energy circulation in this ætheric body. Again, if this be true it is highly probable that they will have an intimate relationship to the health of the physical body. It seems to me possible that L. E. Eeman, who has described his researches in a book *Co-operative Healing*, has discovered and used therapeutically one of these energy circulations. His work bears the stamp of honest and careful enquiry, and should be examined by those concerned with the relevance of these factors to both physical and mental health.

Apart from the importance of the ætheric body or vehicle—of which at the present we know very little—it is clear that  $\psi$ -faculty, if it could be exercised at will, would be of enormous service in diagnosis. The use of  $\psi$ -faculty by a medium in trance would be one possible line of enquiry, but everything would depend on the particular level of the patient's personality with which the medium established rapport. A more superficial level of mind would probably result in revealing fears, hopes, and wishes (as Osty found). On the other hand, rapport with the deeper levels of the patient might provide reliable information on matters of physical and psychological health and disease. The exercise of  $\psi$ -faculty at will, in a state of approximately normal consciousness, is a comparatively rare gift. It would appear, however, that there may be means by which  $\psi$ -faculty can be developed and controlled. Such methods are found in certain yogic practices, and have been known for a long time in the East.

There are some drugs, such as mescaline, which appear to give rise to extrasensory perception, and it may well be that these or other related drugs will also make possible the exercise of psycho-kinesis. Sometimes anæsthetics have un-

folded vistas of perception and even transcendental experience, but of the controlled possibility of this, or the conditions favouring it, we know very little as yet.

If, as the phenomenon of object-reading suggests (*vide* Chapter IV), a good sensitive can by touching an object belonging to a person achieve a degree of rapport with that person, there is here available a potential method of diagnosis, both of physical and mental disorders, not requiring the presence of the patient. The sensitive who could achieve 100 per cent. reliability by such a method is probably extremely rare. Dr. Connell's book *Perceptive Healing* describes experiments made with Miss Geraldine Cummins' faculty in this way, and the results suggest that here may be a method of great potentialities in the future.

If extrasensory faculty may in the future aid diagnosis, it is equally probable that psycho-kinesis may likewise aid treatment. There are undoubtedly energies generated by the mind of which we know virtually nothing. They may tilt a dice or lift a heavy table. It is for the future to determine how to create, to control, and to direct such energies usefully and precisely. There may well come a time in the distant future when the surgeon's knife will become obsolete and the operator be skilled in psycho-kinesis. We are clearly only at the beginning of strange new developments, which, fantastic as they may appear to us in their applications, are not in fact any stranger than some of the present well-attested facts of psychical research.

#### FOR PHILOSOPHY : NEW RELEVANT DATA

Philosophy is concerned with fundamental questions which underlie the various fields of knowledge. Such problems as the nature of knowledge and perception, of the freedom of the will, of the status of space and time, of the nature

of mind, and of what is real and what is illusory—these are basic themes of philosophy. The ordinary man attempting to understand the views of philosophers finds himself immersed in a specialised terminology which he cannot understand, but he is, nevertheless, aware of the need for a “philosophy of life”. The world familiar to him, and the life he has to live, present problems which clamour for understanding in his meditative moments. Of these we shall say a little in the concluding section.

There are many points at which, it seems to me, the data of psychical research have a bearing on philosophical enquiry. (1) The relations of mind to brain. (2) The problems of Time and Causation in relation to precognition. (3) The nature of perception in relation to phenomena such as  $\psi$ -faculty, apparitions, and out-of-the-body experience. (4) The old problems of force and action-at-a-distance in the light of psycho-kinesis.

The author has no competence in philosophy and can do no more than suggest that here may be new and relevant data.

#### FOR RELIGION : A FRIENDLY ALLY

The question may have occurred to the reader's mind as to whether there is any relationship between psychical research and religion. Fundamentally, I think that any relationship is quite remote. Viewing the human self as a kind of hierarchy or synthesis of many different levels of reality—physical, ætheric, emotional-mental, intuitive, transcendental (or spiritual)—it will be clear that psychical phenomena are concerned with the lower levels of personality and the insights of religion are concerned with the higher levels. There is, of course, a common misconception that what is “non-material” is *ipso facto* “spiritual”, but such a dichotomy of the world is quite valueless, and more precise terms must be

used if we are to account for the data of observation and experience.

The term "religion" is used to embrace many different ideas. The essence of religion I take to be the mystical insights of some great soul. The goal of religious aspiration, I assume, is to share in these insights oneself—to experience and partake of that same reality. The term "religion", however, usually includes intellectual formulations and interpretations of these insights, which come to be built into, or form the basis of, a system of thought, viz. a theology. The term also covers a praxis—that is, a system of ritual which is the expression on a symbolic level of the truths that are believed by the faithful.

On the highest level of mystical insight, there is no point of contact with psychical research. On the lower level of the intellectual formulation of religious belief, there is perhaps a point of relationship. During the last century the prevailing scientific attitude of materialism and rationalism was antagonistic to religious belief. This attitude is now slowly changing, due to new ideas arising within science itself, but the data of psychical research are providing a final death-blow to materialism. With the recognition of new energies and new phenomena quite outside the scheme of physical law, pointing as they do away from a non-material order, the climate of opinion created should be much more sympathetic and open to consider the data of revelation.

There is one other point at which psychical research impinges on matters of interest to religion. In their historic beginnings all of the great religions have records in their scriptures and sacred books of miraculous happenings. In a less scientific age these were regarded as lending an aura of prestige to those who worked them—providing, indeed, the hall-mark of divine approval of the Teacher. In the recent era of scientific materialism, miracles were viewed by intelli-

gent people as a stumbling block, as evidence of the intrusion of a good deal of superstition and legend into the records. Today, most if not all of the miracles can be accepted as credible in the light of the phenomena considered in this book. Powers of the mind which we have come across already, if fully under the control of the will, would be capable of performing these miracles. Our concept of the term "miracle" would then be of an unusual physical event, inexplicable on the basis of current laws of the physical world, but wholly "natural" as an exercise of the powers and energies of the mental level.

I can see no reason why Religion should not view Psychical Research as a friendly fellow-traveller in the search for Truth. Psychical Research is primarily a search for Truth by the well-established scientific method of experiment and by the traditional method of analysis of testimony common to such disciplines as law and history. Its field extends between the familiar material world we know through our senses and the so-called subjective world of Mind. Behind the levels of Mind are unplumbed depths of being which take us nearer to the ultimately Real. But this is the territory—awesome, fascinating, rapturous, and infinitely more important—of the Mystics.

#### *Books for Further Reading*

1. *Grades of Significance*: G. N. M. TYRRELL (Rider & Co., 2nd ed., 1947).
2. *The Superphysical*: ARTHUR W. OSBORN (Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1937).
3. *The Conquest of Illusion*: J. J. VAN DER LEEUW (A. A. Knopf, 1928).
4. *Isis and Osiris*: LAWRENCE HYDE (Rider & Co., 1946).
5. *The Nameless Faith*: LAWRENCE HYDE (Rider & Co., 1949).

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