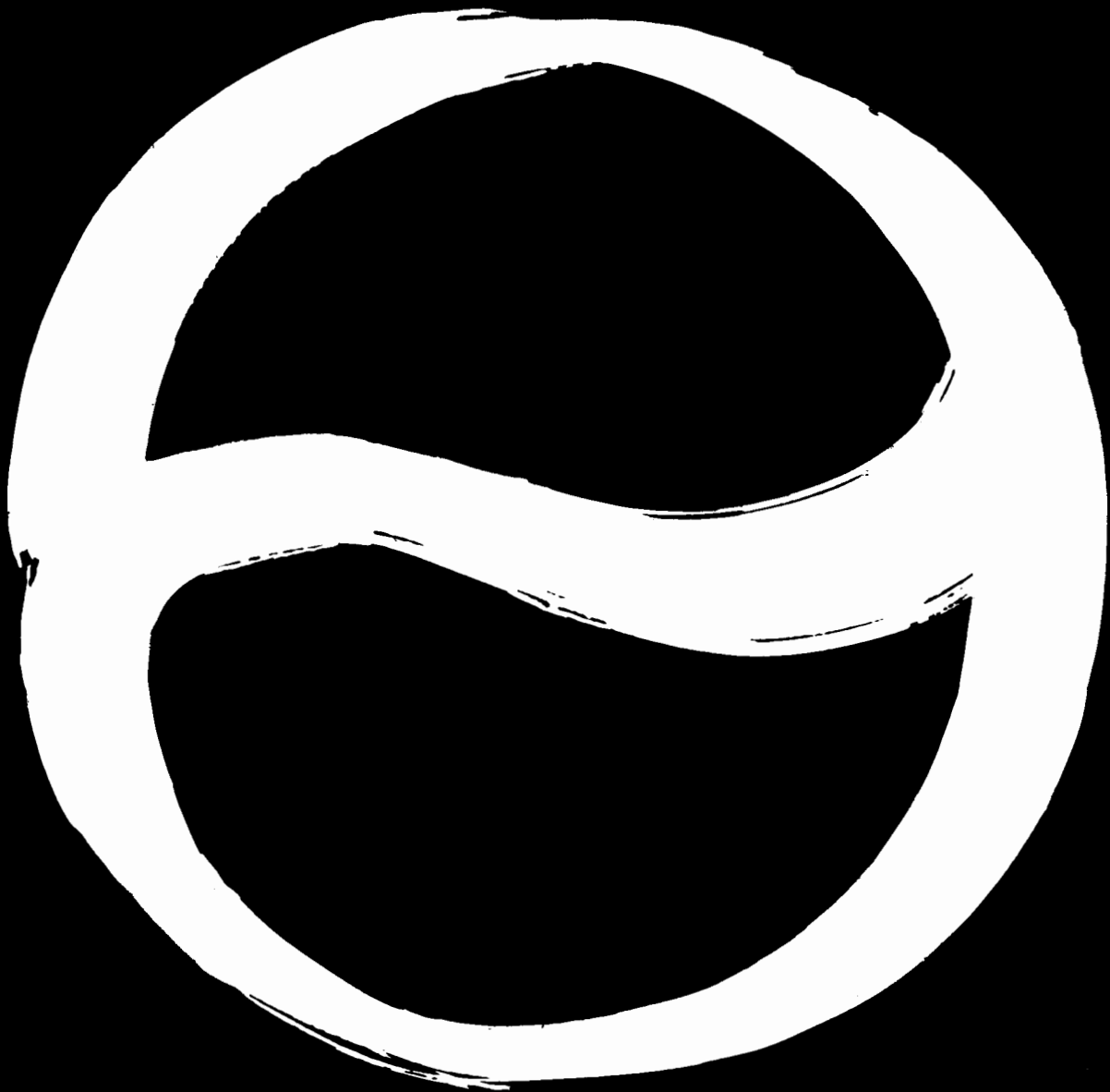


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Religiousness and Near-Death Experiences: An Empirical Study

Kenneth Ring

Dr. Ring is Professor of Psychology at the University of Connecticut, and First Vice President of the Association for the Scientific Study of Near-Death Phenomena. His preliminary report on this work appeared in THETA Volume 7 Number 2, Spring 1979.

Enough evidence pertaining to the prototypic near-death experience has been adduced in recent years to warrant the assertion that it is an authentic phenomenon (e.g., Moody, 1975, 1977; Kübler-Ross, 1977; Sabom and Kreutziger, 1978; Ring, 1979; Greyson and Stevenson, 1978; Lundahl, 1979; Schoonmaker, 1979; Osis and Haraldsson, 1977). Nevertheless, its interpretation remains very much an open question. One skeptical view of this phenomenon is that it represents essentially a religiously-inspired sequence of hallucinations. According to this interpretation, the crisis of apparent imminent death triggers a series of religiously-tinged visual hallucinations in keeping with an individual's religious belief system and expectations concerning an afterlife. Since most persons in this culture claim to be at least nominally religious and adhere to a widely shared religious belief system which promises an afterlife, the frequency with which a common near-death experience is reported is thus easily accounted for. In short, believing is seeing.

To evaluate this interpretation, one hundred and two persons who had undergone a near-death crisis were interviewed at length concerning any experiences they might have had at the time. Furthermore, information was collected regarding the respondents' religious affiliation and a number of questions were asked, which collectively provide an overall index of individual religiousness. If the religious hallucination interpretation of the near-death experience is correct, one would anticipate a positive correlation between religiousness and near-death experiences. That is, the more religious the individual, the more likely he would be to report a prototypic near-death experience. Since I also measured the depth or "richness" of these experiences, one might also expect that religious individuals would be more likely to have deeper or more elaborate near-death experiences.

In addition to examining the role of religiousness as a possible antecedent (or correlate) of the near-death experience, an attempt was made to determine whether there were any systematic religious aftereffects among these respondents. My findings here will also be briefly summarized in this paper.

Let us look first, however, at the data which bear most directly on the religious hallucination hypothesis. When I correlated scores on the religiousness index with the quantitative measures of the near-death experience, I found no relationship whatever. The correlations ranged from $-.08$ to $-.01$ for various tests of association. In short, what these analyses disclosed was that neither the likelihood nor the depth of a near-death experience was systematically related to individual religiousness. Non-religious people—including self-professed atheists—were just as likely to have Moody-type experiences as were the conventionally devout. Similarly, there was no obvious relationship between religious affiliation and near-death experiences among my respondents.

Data from other research—which were published while my own study was in progress—have also supported my findings here. In a recent study of 107 near-death survivors, Sabom and Kreutziger (1978) found no relationship between an index of religious involvement and the near-death experience. And in Osis and Haraldsson's (1977) well-known cross-cultural study of deathbed visions in the U.S. and India, there was again a failure to find a straightforward relationship between religiousness and deathbed visions.

So far, then, the work that has been reported suggests that the near-death experience is independent of both religiousness and religious affiliation. This is not to say, however, that one's religious views don't shape the experience to some extent. From my own study, it seemed evident, for example, that the interpretation that was placed on the experience by the individual was markedly influenced by his religious belief system. An atheist or agnostic, for instance, does not typically arrive at a Christian interpretation of his experience (although this does happen occasionally). This is even more obvious in Osis and Haraldsson's data. Also, one's emotional reaction to the experience may be affected by one's prior belief system, as one would expect.

I think I can fairly sum up the findings here by saying that one's response to the experience is colored by one's religious ideology, but that the raw near-death experience itself is independent of it. In this latter sense, then, it seems clear that religiousness alone is not a determinant of the near-death experience.

Accordingly, I remain unconvinced by the hypothesis which would "explain away" the near-death experience as nothing more than a religiously-motivated hallucination.

If religiousness is not a determinant nor a correlate of the experience, perhaps it is an effect of undergoing it. Do people become more religious following a near-death experience and, if so, how is this effect manifested?

Here the issue is far more complex and subtle. As a result, it is more difficult for me to condense my findings in a way that does justice to them, but let me attempt to give you their gist in any event.

If one first looks at this issue in a crude statistical way, it is true that, across the board, near-death experiencers do describe themselves as more religious than they were before. (This finding, incidentally, does not hold for near-death survivors who report no near-death experience; their religiousness is not, on the average affected by their close encounter with death.)

Nevertheless, if one examines more closely exactly what near-death experiencers say concerning their present religious beliefs and values, it is clear that their experience tends to make them more religious in a highly specific way. I will try to outline here the form that this increased religiousness takes. By no means should you assume that this pattern is evident in everyone afterward; that is definitely not the case. It does represent, however, the modal tendencies of those respondents who address this issue.

First of all, experiencers do not necessarily attend church more often afterward or participate in other modes of formal religious worship. Rather there is a heightened inward religious feeling that is often indicated—which does not seem to require a conventional religious format for it to be manifested. Instead, near-death survivors will describe themselves as feeling closer to God, as more inwardly prayerful, or as having a greater awareness of God's presence. This personal sense of God is sometimes so strong that conventional religious observances seem irrelevant or unnecessary.

Second, even though an attitude of indifference or even contempt toward organized religion is sometimes expressed by experiencers, it is usually stated within a context that implies an overall tolerance for all ways of religious worship. From this point of view, there is no one religion or religious denomination which is superior or "true"; rather all religions are expressions of a single truth. It is the smug sectarian quality of some religious groups to which experiencers tend to object, not to the basics of religious worship itself.

Third, there tends to be an emphasis on the humanitarian and ethical teachings of the great religions: respondents will stress the importance of love, caring and compassion for others. In fact, if there was a single value which seemed to epitomize the comments of near-death survivors in this respect, it was their increased emphasis on the need for unconditional love or acceptance for others.

Finally, near-death experiencers emerge from their confrontation with death convinced, as a group, that there is a life to come and that it will be beautiful, peaceful and joyous. This is a striking effect statistically and, again, it is found chiefly for experiencers; near-death survivors who do not have an experience tend to show no change in their belief patterns here. Furthermore—but I don't want to make too much of this because it is based on a post-hoc analysis—experiencers are statistically more likely to

express a belief in the possibility of reincarnation (not necessarily a belief in reincarnation) compared to near-death survivors without an experience.

From the data of this study, then, I am led to conclude that religiousness appears to be mainly an aftereffect rather than a determinant of near-death experiences. Thus, it does not appear likely that an interpretative framework for these experiences can be structured in terms of a facile and reductive religious hallucination hypothesis. In my judgment, it may prove much more instructive to view these experiences as representing a shift from a sensory-based state of consciousness, grounded in an intact physical body, to one which is directly attuned to a holographic reality in which time, space and identity are transcendentally altered. Such a conception, at any rate, is advanced in my book, *Life at Death* (Ring, 1980), where I describe my research in detail.

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Activity Metaphysics and the Survival Problem

Hoyt Edge

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The traditional question of survival, or more precisely the survival of personality after biological death, has been wedded to a particular metaphysics which has been accepted by both believers and non-believers. It is a view which can be called entity metaphysics, and which describes the ultimate constituents of the world as mind or matter or both. In this pervasive view mind and matter are considered to be the ultimate entities out of which all real things are made.

Descartes, a primary spokesman for this view, argued that there were three kinds of substances—mind, God (both of which may be considered in the same way for our purposes, as I intend to show), and matter. Reality was composed of these substances. All three were important, and an adequate description of at least the most basic aspects of the world could be derived from a description of these substances and their interrelations. On the one extreme, the materialist argues that matter alone is primary, and that there is no need to refer to any mind or spirit to describe the most important aspects of reality. On the other extreme is the idealist, who asserts that only mind is primary.

All of these views, however much they may differ in their assertion of what is primary, nevertheless do agree that reality is composed, ultimately, of entities, either minds or matter (material objects). In addition, all seem to agree that we require the notion of an existing mind before we can conceive of survival as being possible. Indeed, the survival question is asked almost exclusively in these terms: does there exist a self-existing mind? If so, this allows man the possibility of surviving his bodily death as mind.

During the rise of materialism in the late nineteenth century, it is not surprising to find anti-materialists, many of whom were not Christians, turning to parapsychology in search of empirical support for the existence of mind and, thus, support for the idea of survival. The Cambridge University moral philosopher Henry Sidgwick was a founding member of the Society for Psychical Research, and it is very likely, for instance, that his motive was not only an inherent interest in the empirical investigation of these phenomena. His work with Spiritualists can be seen as a personal attempt to prove life after death. But Sidgwick, although having grave personal doubts concerning Christianity, did believe in a moral order that was qualitatively different from the material realm, while the rise of Darwinism threatened to present moral considerations as mere manifestations of material coincidence. Further, he was convinced that a victory for materialism would have disastrous social effects. He was therefore compelled to use the empirical techniques at hand, schooled as he was in the empiricism of Mill and Comte, to support the thesis that non-material forces were at work in telepathy, and to assert that mediumistic communication was veridical.

In our own day, J.B. Rhine (1954) has suggested that parapsychology supplies empirical support for the existence of mind. This view is also expressed by Stuart Holroyd, who writes:

The importance of psi research is that it turns up well-proven facts that are incompatible with the mechanistic and materialist image of man that has predominated in our culture for nearly four centuries. It shows that the psychic and spiritual faculties of man have been stunted and repressed in the consciousness produced by this predominant image, and it provides factual and theoretical material to create a new image to supercede the old in which man's psychic and spiritual dimension will be restored. This is why the advocates of consciousness change as the only survival strategy look to the parapsychologist for support (Holroyd, 1977, p. 34).

Even today, parapsychology is considered by anti-materialists to be a tool to prove that minds exist. For again, if minds exist, then they may survive the death of the body.

In what follows, I intend to question what I have called entity metaphysics, and along with it I will examine that view of the survival problem outlined above, which forms a part of the tradition of that metaphysics. I will conclude two things about survival from my discussion: first, that the traditional problem of survival loses its importance with a rejection of entity metaphysics, and second, that if we do talk about survival, we should describe it in radically different terms.

Rather than proceed with a direct assault on entity metaphysics, I would like to approach the subject indirectly, through a discussion of the age-old philosophical question: "Is there a purpose to existence? Or, is there meaning in life?" With regard to the question of purpose in life, the

relations of mind to matter and of God to the world become important. As was mentioned previously, there is an analogy between God and mind—God can be conceived of as Infinite Spirit, while mind is viewed as finite spirit. In most traditional philosophies, the relation of God to the world is simply the relation of my mind to my body "writ large."

If, for example, I ask about the purpose of a fountain pen, we can see that the purpose of the pen has been given to it by a subject. That is, the inventor of the fountain pen had an idea; he conceived of an object with a particular purpose. And so it seems to be with any object. Its purpose is given to it by a mind outside of it.

Similarly, when we ask questions about the meaning of life, the question of purpose is approached in the same manner. As a finite spirit or mind is the source of purpose for an object, so the Infinite Spirit of God must be the source of purpose for the world and, ultimately, the objects and people in it. As individuals, we find our meaningful places in the scheme of things just as the parts of an automobile have their necessary and important functions in helping the automobile run as it should. In this tradition, the main concern is to make certain that God exists. For if there is no God, there is no meaning. The connection between God and purpose is so intimate that it forms an argument for the existence of God: since there is meaning in our lives, then there must be a God who provided that meaning.

The nineteenth century existentialist philosopher W.F. Nietzsche is, perhaps, the severest critic of this view which grounds meaning in God, although he was quite impressed by its implications. Nietzsche also understood that within this understanding, without God any hope for ultimate purpose in life is destroyed, and this brings a depressing "nausea." We then have no "ground of being," no foundation for our existence. Without God, the psychological "hooks" which have stabilized us are lost, and that leaves us, in Nietzsche's words: "straying as through an infinite nothing" (Kaufmann, 1968).

However, Nietzsche offers us hope in the face of such absurdity and nihilism with his idea of eternal recurrence. (It is not possible for me to prove textually in this paper that this is the correct interpretation of Nietzsche's idea, which has been variously interpreted.) Nietzsche suggests that all of us return eternally to live exactly the same lives and do the same things that we are doing now. To those who accept the traditional metaphysics, this may seem like a devastating idea. If one's life is wrapped in meaninglessness, the thought of that life being lived eternally is depressing beyond all words.

Yet, it seems to me that Nietzsche can be understood as merely reacting against the tradition of entity metaphysics and suggesting a new approach. Rather than proposing that a person does in fact come back to the same life again and again as a mind/subject, we can interpret Nietzsche as suggesting a new approach to meaning. We can ask ourselves: "If the action I am engaged in occurs eternally, am I satisfied? What would my reaction be if I were to engage in this

particular activity in lives that would recur eternally?" If my answers to these questions are positive, then I am engaged in an activity that is ultimately meaningful for me, in a new sense of meaning which I have created. If my answers are negative, this might induce me to change my activities to become more meaningful. Thus, the idea of eternal recurrence can be used as a criterion for meaning.

This becomes clearer when we ask ourselves what kind of activities fulfill the criterion Nietzsche proposes. What are those moments in our lives that could recur eternally and would satisfy us? Speaking for myself, they are the times in my life when I do not feel myself in the sense of a subject to be present in the experience. Rather than describing an experience as, say, "I am reading a book," it seems better described as "total engagement in the reading." The "I" is essentially lost, and is only regained on reflection or upon undertaking a new, less "absorbing" task. In these experiences, neither "I" nor "time" seem to be relevant concepts.

Contemporary psychology has given a name to this class of experiences. It calls them flow experiences, because there is no sense of self *per se* but rather a merging of action and awareness. This kind of experience happens, among other instances, in sport and in acts of artistic creativity. It can happen to a surgeon who is so intent on an operation he is performing that he fails to notice the ceiling falling in around him, or to a mechanic who fails to notice that it is quitting time and so works on and on. The loss of awareness of self and the loss of the sense of time seem to be the two qualities that people mention most when describing the flow experience. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1966), Nietzsche expressed this aphoristically: "A man's maturity—consists in having found again the seriousness one had as a child, at play." The child is completely absorbed in play activity, and there seems to be less distinction between subject and object than in the experience of the adult. We can say that the child's undifferentiated play experience is more like the flow experience.

The psychologist Arthur Deikman (1966) discusses the psychological process of automatization, the process by which the individual child, during the maturation process, develops more and more concepts. Initially, the baby faces the world, as William James put it, in a "booming, buzzing confusion." It is only with age that the child begins to separate objects out from the undifferentiated unity of his experience. He is increasingly able to handle more abstract concepts, and divides the world of his experience into more and more objects. This is part of the socialization process.

Deikman shows us also that the flow experience is on a continuum with another kind of experience which is even more profound. He contends that the process of deautomatization, that is the process of breaking down concepts, is the process that meditators use to achieve mystical experience. The most important characteristics of mystical experience are the two that we have already mentioned as being present in the flow experience, namely the break-

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down of the subject/object distinction and the loss of the sense of time. But these features are present in mystical experience in a more extreme and absolute sense than is the case within the flow experience. Nevertheless, the relationship between the flow experience and mystical experience demonstrates the important elements in the kind of experiences which create meaning in Nietzsche's sense.

This relationship between the flow and mystical experience has prompted some to describe sport as western Zen, because some athletes participate in the flow experience during their sport activities. For instance, John Brodie, a professional football quarterback, talks about his experience of time slowing down while opposing linemen charge at him (Murphy and White, 1978). Zen archery occurs only when the archer does not feel that it is he who is aiming the arrow. There is a loss of the sense of self and a reduction or elimination of time. One feels oneself to be in an eternal present, and there is a sufficiency about the moment.

In my discussion of the flow experience and its relationship to mystical experience, indirectly I have been rejecting traditional entity metaphysics and suggesting that a new kind of metaphysics—we can call it an activity metaphysics—should take its place. This suggestion is not new. The basis of what I am saying will also be found in authors concerned with phenomenology, action theory and certain kinds of American pragmatism. Activity metaphysics stresses the kind of action or activity wherein the sense of self, and with it the subject/object dichotomy, is missing. Now, let us return to our original question of human survival after death, to see how this new activity metaphysics informs the survival problem.

The notion of an independent subject surviving his or her biological death is itself dependent on traditional entity metaphysics for its expression. For Descartes, mind substance was simple and unitary, and it was because of these properties that it could survive death. Anything that was simple and unitary could neither disintegrate nor be destroyed, so it had to survive. However, some empirical evidence puts this into question. Extrasensory perception (ESP) seems to undercut the idea of the human mind being an absolute simple substance enclosed on itself. For if one can know the content of another person's mind, not by inference or by being told but by telepathy, then the mind does not seem to be cut off from the rest of the environment as Descartes thought.

At times, there seems to occur in our experience a kind of merging of the contents of different minds. Schizophrenia seems to indicate that the human mind is not unitary. The phenomena of split and multiple personalities casts doubt upon the notion of one, unitary person existing in each mind substance. Precognition (ESP of future events) precludes our use of the radio wave analogy to explain how paranormal information is transferred in ESP, so we are led to the conclusion that the mind is not so simple as Descartes thought. In general, the more we take into account experiences of mental illness and ESP, the more grounds we have

for rejecting the Cartesian view of mind and entity metaphysics and, with this, reasons for traditional beliefs in survival of death.

As I have suggested above, the rejection of entity metaphysics coupled with the acceptance of a new, activity metaphysics, brings a new focus to the survival question. In the first place from our new perspective, survival of the individual after death becomes much less important an issue, if it does not become irrelevant. The importance of this type of survival seems to depend on traditional, entity metaphysics.

According to the traditional view, if there is meaning in life, then there exists a God who can provide an after-life. For Immanuel Kant, for instance, such an after-life was a necessity of the moral order. We know that we are not always rewarded for correct action in this life. It is, therefore necessary to postulate an after-life wherein God rights the balance of the moral order and gives to each of us our deserved rewards. This earthly life was viewed as merely a preparation for the next one, in which our existence would be much more complete. This life was a testing ground, at best, and at worst was seen as something to be endured until one "came home."

The view I am proposing is that we should "remain faithful to the earth," as Nietzsche suggests. We have seen that meaning can be created in certain actions (these may be different activities for different people), so that energy is focussed in this life. On this view, there is a sufficiency about the flow experience which is found within the experience itself, not given to it from without. It is not that, literally, the event will or may recur eternally, but rather that there is a kind of eternity within the moment. There is no projection into the future or into the past. The sense of time is lost. It is as if one is able to experience the eternal moment. In one sense, the experience is so sufficient in itself that there is no thought for its return, even in our instant replay culture. The more sufficient the experience in itself, the less one is concerned with the after-life or survival of death. Survival becomes an issue only when there is no meaning or sufficiency in our present existence. Given these characteristics in a new metaphysics, survival may be the case but it becomes almost irrelevant.

The next question is: having accepted activity metaphysics, how do we view survival of death if we wish to concern ourselves with it? In entity metaphysics, separate minds and bodies existed, so that survival was understood in terms of minds. In its assumption that we should look to experiences we presently have, to indicate what survival experience may be like, this view is correct. The traditional view holds that there is experience of an individual self and, therefore, it is the individual self which survives death. The body plays an important part in this individuation. Bodies are obviously separate, so survival as an individual is a logical conclusion. Most major religions that have postulated survival of death, do so in terms of a kind of bodily survival. For example, we find that the conception of survival of death among the early Christians is survival in a

resurrection body. Only later, when Christianity was heavily influenced by Greek thought and, particularly, by the assertion of an individuated mind, was the notion of disembodied survival of death taken seriously.

By contrast, the flow experience is one in which the individuality of the person does not seem to be of primary importance. The self or "I" is lost in the activity, and the body along with it. Neither self nor body, then, is distinguished as a primary ingredient in the experience. Activity metaphysics does not describe the world in terms of individuated minds and bodies, so that survival of the individual personality does not seem to follow from this perspective. I have already mentioned that the flow experience seems to be on a continuum with mystical experience, with the latter having characteristics which are experienced more deeply and postulated as absolute. It seems that the flow experience suggests survival of a type analogous to mystical experience.

The kind of survival of death suggested here is one in which there is no individuation of the person, either from other persons or from the rest of the environment. It will be the ultimate merging of awareness with action, of merging self with experience. In this case, there is no personal survival of death. Rather, there is survival of a kind of experience, of which we have all had an inkling, but which we have been describing inadequately in terms of traditional, entity metaphysics. With a more adequate description of our experience as is suggested in activity metaphysics, we will then understand the world less in terms of minds and bodies, and more in terms of activities. And the more that we increase the importance of pure experience, the more we will tend to reject the traditional notion of disembodied survival of personality.

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An Electronic "Poltergeist"?

Raymond Bayless

Mr. Bayless is an artist, a long-time psychical researcher and author of several books on parapsychology.

The part that electrical forces may play in the creation of psychic phenomena has long been the object of speculation. But aside from such speculation, electrical or electro-magnetic phenomena have frequently been recorded during the production of paranormal phenomena.

For our purpose the most relevant case is the Rosenheim poltergeist of 1967, which took place in Bavaria and was investigated by Hans Bender (Beloff, 1974). Along with raps and abnormal movements of objects, light bulbs exploded spontaneously, and apparent telephone calls were revealed by billing, but which on investigation were found not to have been made. The wiring and electrical equipment in the plagued law offices were found to be in perfect order, but abnormal power surges were recorded.

A practically unknown outbreak of light bulb poppings in Ojai, California (Los Angeles Times, 1966) is also suggestive of the Rosenheim phenomena. Significantly, when the representatives of the Edison Company investigated this outbreak, power surges were found within the disturbed house which were not present in the company power lines outside the house.

Early in July, 1978, I received a telephone call from Miss Gladys Gordon, during which she described a strange order of telephonic and paging system disturbances which were plaguing a very large industrial plant in which she worked. She gave me a description of the phenomena and a general history of the disturbances that had taken place there. She also offered to call me during the next outbreak.

About 2:45 p.m. on July 21, Miss Gordon called again to say that the disturbances had been very active for several days and were then in full flower. She suggested that I join her immediately at her place of employment. I then called D. Scott Rogo, told him to meet me at the plant, and drove on ahead to meet Miss Gordon. After I arrived at 3:30 p.m. and had given my name to the front desk receptionist, I was interested to hear her spontaneous remark that general electronic interference, including high-pitched sounds, had been very intense. Another young lady confirmed the interference.

I was told that, ten minutes earlier, Miss Gordon had left the building for a short time, an event which caused the disturbances to cease temporarily. During this conversation, Miss Gordon returned, and led me to her office. While walking with her along the hallway, I heard several people comment to the effect that "the witch was at it again," etc. I recalled that, during our first telephone conversation, Miss Gordon had explained that the telephone and paging systems in the plant were rendered periodically inoperable, due to reception of high-pitched, electronic sounds. Further, she mentioned that at these times, she would leave the building for short periods. When she did, the shrill, disturbing sounds would die out, and normal operation of the plant's communication systems resumed.

In her office, Miss Gordon repeated the history of the strange noises and electronic disturbances in detail, and told me about the plant's manufacturing equipment and its intense output of radio waves. This equipment had been heavily shielded, due to previous difficulties with a nearby airport's flight control tower and its communications system, but despite this shielding there was still a large output of radio waves. (While in the plant, my tape recorder was rendered inoperable by the reception of high-pitched sounds.)

At 4:15 p.m. Scott Rogo arrived, and our discussion continued. We learned that the disturbances had begun in August, 1977 and that electrical oddities had then appeared almost immediately. Miss Gordon, along with other employees at the plant, soon discovered that she was the apparent focal point of the activity. Her office telephone and other telephones that she might use would become completely dead and silent, or else would emit high-pitched, electronic sounds which completely eliminated any possibility of communication via the phones. Also, the buttons on the telephone base would light up, apparently at random. Further, the paging speakers throughout the plant would also give out similar, but extremely loud sounds, and the paging system too would become inoperative. Miss Gordon remarked that, on occasion, her electric typewriter and

calculator were also affected, a statement that was later verified by the general manager of the plant. She mentioned further that, during particularly intense disturbances, she could sense the output of radio waves: "I can feel it in my body," she remarked. This remark was echoed by other employees in the plant.

While we were talking, at 4:47 p.m. a paging speaker, set in the ceiling just outside Miss Gordon's office, began to emit an intense, continuous, high-pitched screech. We noted that this was also emitted by other paging speakers along the hallway and, probably, throughout the entire plant. Any attempt to communicate via the paging system would have been drowned out, so the system was, for the moment, inoperative.

Following quickly upon this outbreak of shrill sounds, the various station buttons on the base of Miss Gordon's desk telephone began to light up in random fashion. While this was underway, several times she picked up the telephone receiver, having predicted that it would be either dead and silent or else producing the same sound which was coming from the paging speakers. Several times I was handed the receiver, and on each occasion it was in fact either completely silent or producing a tone like that being emitted from the hall speakers. Scott Rogo also heard the interference and silences, and we had ample opportunity to verify these phenomena between ourselves. At 4:49 p.m., the noises suddenly ceased.

I should note that when the first period of interference began, I heard several remarks along the hallway to the effect that: "Sally was at it again!"

Within seconds of the first outbreak, a second began, again commencing with the paging speakers. And, also as before, the desk telephone prefaced its peculiar behavior with its station buttons lighting up randomly. When the telephone was tried once more, it was either dead silent or producing shrill tones. This second period of electronic activity ended at 4:53 p.m.

There was a third outbreak of activity at 5:07 p.m., which lasted only seven seconds. This interference was of much less intensity, and confined itself to the paging speakers only. Miss Gordon, Scott Rogo and I left the besieged building a few minutes after this last outbreak.

Interestingly, a small electric clock on Miss Gordon's desk operated quite normally during the periods of disturbance. I had brought a small pocket compass with me to test for the presence of any possible electromagnetic oddities but as with the clock, there was no unusual behavior on the part of the compass.

On September 19, I paid a second visit to Miss Gordon at her plant, and stayed for about forty-five minutes. Only one abnormal incident occurred. The hall paging speakers once more began to emit the high-pitched screech, but the duration of this disturbance was short and the volume of sound produced was much lower than that heard during the previous visit.

I met several employees at the plant while talking with Miss Gordon, and received from them information of

value to this case. Miss Audrey Smith volunteered the most important item. She told us that she had been the focal point of a somewhat similar disturbance at the plant about one year before. This was prior to Miss Gordon's employment. Miss Smith's telephone had produced electronic sounds, but the paging system was not affected. She mentioned that the disturbance ceased when new telephone and paging equipment was installed. Interestingly, she also spontaneously said that she frequently had a bodily sensation of the output of radio waves.

During my second visit with Miss Gordon, the plant general manager Mr. Cecil Vance joined us in her office. He stated that in his presence, Miss Gordon's electric typewriter and calculator had behaved oddly during an outburst of activity. He too stated that he had felt the output of radio waves bodily, an observation which provided confirmation of the statements by both Miss Gordon and Miss Smith. Eventually, Mr. Leslie Butterworth, Vice President of Sales, joined our discussion. He claimed that a relationship between Miss Gordon's presence and the plant disturbances had been definitely established.

Previous to this visit, on August 10, I had visited Mr. James Tyler, vice-president of a prominent company specializing in telephone communication systems. His company had revised and installed new communication equipment within the affected plant and, as reports of the strange behavior of the communication systems reached him, he had then begun a study of the entire matter. Essentially, he stated that the peculiar phenomena began in the plant after the original telephone system had been revised and after additions to it were made.

His company had begun its investigation by changing Miss Gordon's desk phone, but that had no effect on the phenomena. Next, the station buttons on her telephone were revised, but that gave no relief. Miss Gordon's telephone lines were isolated. Still the disturbances continued. Mr. Tyler observed that: "Inasmuch as we were changing the system to a much larger one...it might have had an effect on the disturbance. We used different relays, different circuitry, but these changes had no effect." Further, it was his opinion that "there are only certain basic things that happen in telephone equipment, and once you have checked these functions, then you know that you have done everything to correct anything normally out of order."

One final incident occurred on May 17, 1979 when Miss Gordon called me at 2:20 p.m. and my wife Marjorie answered the call. At first Miss Gordon's voice was clear, but soon it faded and was drowned out by high-pitched, electronic sounds. Both she and my wife hung up. Miss Gordon called back later, however, and told me that since the previous summer, the phenomena at the plant had continued and, in fact, had become even more intense. She observed that she affected other people's telephones when she called them from the plant.

In summary, then, electronic equipment consisting of telephone and paging systems in a manufacturing plant became sporadically disturbed in the presence of Miss

Gordon, and also prior to her employment at the plant when Miss Smith was the centre of a similar outbreak. Miss Gordon insists that the disturbances are related to her emotional states, and also claims that her car radio as well as the telephone and television in her apartment are on occasion affected.

A heavy output of radio waves is still produced by the plant equipment and, despite careful shielding, a certain amount escapes the shielding. Various people employed at the plant have said that they can, at times, bodily feel the radio output. And here, I suggest, lies a partial key to understanding the phenomena of this case.

It seems very unlikely that two unrelated individuals in the same area at different times and not in the presence of each other, can be "poltergeist agents." Therefore, I suggest that this may be a proto-poltergeist case caused in part by familiar physical processes—in this case actual radio wave emissions, electromagnetic fields or transmissions. The two young women involved were, I suspect, acting as detectors who modulated radio waves into a form that could be picked up physically on electronic equipment, such as telephones and speakers. The "raw material" for the phenomena encountered here was actual radio wave emissions. I think that this case can be described as a proto-poltergeist disturbance since its close relationship to normal physical phenomena perhaps removes it from the poltergeist category per se.

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A New Method For The Post-Mortem Survival Problem

J. B. Rhine

Dr. Rhine (1895-1980) personally abandoned research directly into post-mortem survival. However, as may be seen in this article extract, he did not rule out future research into survival, given advances in parapsychological theory and appropriate research methods.

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... Not only do we have more knowledge of psi ability than ever before—and this ability may, of course, be assumed to be the essential principle of communication underlying the PMS [post-mortem survival] hypothesis—but also we have a better setting for the science of parapsychology in which to present the problem of PMS. It can now be made a rather logical question for biology, just as psi ability has logically come to be regarded as a part of an extended psychology.

Moreover, the PMS question can now be more neutrally stated: Is there any recordable sign of personal continuity beyond death or does every trace of mind, including psi, disappear? This question allows a fairly good possibility of an answer, yes or no. Up until now there has been only the search for a possible affirmative answer, sufficient for first attempts at exploration. A negative answer could not have been expected. Now it becomes a more basic question as we inquire what the total role of the psi system is in the organism, how it functions on the various levels and stages of life and embryonic development. Does it have any sort of bodily localization, or any necessary physiological accompaniment? Does it show any degree of somatic interdependence in any way? Or any verifiable independence whatsoever? More specifically, what is the relation of psi to sleep (natural or induced)? Does this mental function ebb and flow with fluctuations of vigor, health, and illnesses of various types in man and the many animal species that can now be counted on for a broad basis of evidence? With all the advances in equipment and methods now available we can well expect to find out what the entire psi side of life is like, how closely identifiable and how far separable, if at all, from the rest it may be.

The PMS question may be made easier today by asking as a first step if *any* living creature really has *anything* deathless in its make-up—anything registrable. If some function, once recognizably vital and personal does survive, it would most likely, almost necessarily, be psi-like, or even more likely some kind of psi-system. Psi is non-physical; it is not known to be localized in the body. Thus psi at least would probably be a part of any immortal element, if only a communicating link or function. Then since a number of animal species have shown psi ability (at least in some members), we could with many advantages indeed start with the "guinea pig" approach. It would of course be just one of the ways of proceeding.

The key difficulty with the PMS question in the past has been that of adequately identifying the source of messages suspected of having had a post-mortem agency. The methodology about which I am now hopeful encourages the researcher to move ahead on acquiring distinctive signs of psi for tracer application to just this type of situation, quite as much as any. Whereas in earlier PMS research we sought methods of identifying memories and other personal characteristics to verify the implied source of the medium's messages, the new approach would fix *first-step* attention on the hypothetical communicator's most identifying signs of psi. In the beginning the aim would be to work with animal subjects to develop a design that would allow the study of long-range, gradually lower states of consciousness and eventually of the terminal stages of life. The various curves of life processes may be expected, on a non-PMS hypothesis, to be closely paralleled by the curve of psi activity. On the other hand, the best possible techniques of psi communication will objectively trace and graph any indications of independent continuity of peculiar personal signs that persist on into and beyond the final stages of declining vitality—if any of them do. We may well hope to have all related sciences working together on the problem—much as has developed in the counterpart study of the *origin* of life.

If, in one animal (and species) after another, nothing of the distinctively indicative psi communication exhibited in the state of highest vitality keeps on manifesting its identifying messages after lower and lower levels of vital activity are reached, the evidence would lead in time to a negative conclusion. On the other hand anything showing continuity beyond life's end would challenge the method to its utter extremities—that is, to show whether other living persons other than the subject himself could be contributing the evidence in question. . . .

Whatever the results might be with animals, the method could be applied to man, at least with terminal patients. But it can well be done with anesthetized persons, either under medical treatment or even better, with normal healthy volunteer subjects. With advanced psi test methods for tracing results to a given source, this ought to have a fair prospect of realization; at least nothing about it is beyond the rational expectation that might follow from the record of psi research, so far as I know it, today. If we are now

going to be able to determine whether it is the subject or the experimenter who is producing the results in the psi laboratories, it would seem safe from now on to expect that we could with increasing expertise trace the connection of psi correlates with states of somatic deterioration, temporary or irrecoverable. In any case, it is not necessary now to be highly confident; it is enough to see a clearly logical design possible, one that can be followed up and one that should justify a trial. But I need hardly add that such a research can be well justified on grounds other than interest in PMS alone.

It would be a proper first step into this PMS program to explore and develop the best possible psi indicators, especially for animal test procedures. But without delay, the roundup of the whole wide range of parapsychic signs should be undertaken. Such an inclusive catalogue of psi quirks and earmarks is needed, not just for the new biological attack on PMS, but for almost everything important still to be discovered in this field.

While the field stands to gain much from such a long-view project, there is little yet to indicate the probable outcome. Let us recall, however, that a whole century of effort has thus far led at most only to a possible improved method of exploring the question. Still, we need on balance to remember that a much longer period than that, with hundreds of times the exploratory personnel and resources of scientific inquiry, have hardly scratched the surface of man's most nearly comparable problem, that of the natural *origin* of mind on the planet. Had that more massively concentrated effort to discover the introduction of life and mind been a highly successful one, psi explorers today could do much better with this question about the other end of the story of life than it is possible now to do.

What we can expect I think, at the very least is a definite answer one way or the other in the course of time. One little reliable sign of PMS as showing the extrabiological nature of psi, either in animal or human subjects, that would stand out as clearly as its extraphysical nature has done over the years, would electrify the whole field of parapsychology as nothing ever has. However, there is now no firm basis for a prediction either way. If, on the other hand, the discovery should eventually be made that there is absolutely no discernible sign of a surviving element of personality to be found when the entire problem area is fully explored and charted, it would have to be accepted—and even regarded in time as fully as much of a discovery for human knowledge as if the conclusion had gone the other way. It now seems clear on the basis of present knowledge that it could go either way, according to "the way it is in nature." What mankind really most needs to know is just what his actual nature and destiny are in all their fullness and factuality, whatever that may be. Illusion, however pleasant, could have but low survival value even for the lay world today.

Yet we are still so vastly ignorant about life and mind and their origin and functioning that I doubt that anyone has a reasonably close guess (or rational inference) as to the

great ultimate universal truth about them. It is likely to be beyond present power to comprehend when and if eventually it is revealed to the sciences. What matters most today, in any case, is that we faithfully preserve this indescribably wonderful privilege of exploring as best we can, intelligently

and responsibly, on ahead into the great unknowns of human nature and destiny with all the endless reach of curiosity, method, and design the expanding sciences can command.

Déjà Vu

Report on The Worksop Disturbances

Frank Podmore

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Frank Podmore (1856-1911) was the author of several books including, with Edmund Gurney and F.W.H. Myers, PHANTASMS OF THE LIVING (1886), for which he investigated a large number of cases.

At the beginning of March, 1883, the *Retford and Gainsborough Times* and other local papers gave accounts of some remarkable disturbances which had occurred in the first two or three days of the month, at the house of a small horsedealer in Worksop, named Joe White. One or two members of the Society entered into communication with the principal persons named in the newspaper reports, and with a friend in the neighbourhood, who very kindly took some trouble in inquiring into the matter for the Society. But it soon became obvious that as nearly all the witnesses of the occurrences related were of the humbler class, and unable, therefore to write a connected account of what had happened, the best way to arrive at the truth of the matter was for one of us to go in person to make inquiries. Accordingly, at the request of the Haunted House Committee, I went down to Worksop on the afternoon of Saturday, the 7th April, with the intention of inspecting the actual scene of the occurrences, and of personally interrogating the principal witnesses; in order, if possible, to arrive at some rational explanation of the business. I spent the Saturday evening and the whole of the following day in my inquiries, and have, I think, obtained as intelligible and trustworthy a history of the matter as the lapse of time, the nature of the phenomena themselves, and the character of the witnesses will permit.

I derived my information from seven principal eye-witnesses of the disturbances, whom I interrogated, with the single exception of White himself, *separately*. I wrote out the statement of each witness in full immediately after the interview; and the three most important witnesses, Higgs, Currass, and White, subsequently read through my notes and signed them. . . . My time was too short to allow a second interview with the four other principal witnesses, and I was unable, therefore to obtain their signature to the depositions; but I have incorporated the statements of all the principal witnesses in my report.

Besides the seven chiefly concerned, I questioned, in presence of White and his wife, three or four other witnesses of the disturbances, viz., White's brother Tom, a bright looking lad of 18 or 20; Solomon Wass and his wife, next door neighbours of the Whites, the former an ordinary North countryman of the lower class, the latter a pleasant looking, intelligent woman; and George Ford (Buck Ford), a man of about 28. From these I obtained general confirmation of the various incidents, as described by White, Higgs, etc., at which they had themselves been present; but time did not permit of much cross-questioning, nor of taking down their evidence in full.

White's house has been built, according to his own statement, about seven years. He has only resided in it three years. I was unable to discover anything about the former occupants. The house stands at the end of a piece of waste land, called the New Building Ground, with another house or cottage attached; the nearest separate building being a public-house, about 100 yards off. With that exception there are no other buildings within about 200 yards.

There is no entrance to the house by the front, the front door being locked, and the joints secured with paper from the inside. Entrance is obtained by a covered passage, open at either end, which separates the two houses, and gives access immediately to a yard, surrounded on one side by high palings, and on the other three by piggeries, stables, and the two houses. . . . The kitchen is about 15 ft. square. The upper floor is divided into two rooms, the back one, corresponding to the kitchen, being used as a bedroom for Tom and the children; the front one as a store-house for bacon, horse-furniture, and various odds and ends. There is also a garret above this, into which I did not enter, it being at the time full of bacon in salt. The whole house, not excepting the bedrooms, is hung with bacon, the very staircase being lined with it, so that I had to draw my coat close to me in going up. A large part of the bacon, as I was told by White, had gone bad during the period of the disturbances.

The front or inner room on the ground-floor was an ordinary room, like all the rest of the house, half filled with bacon, and containing, besides bedroom furniture, a large beer-barrel on trestles; everything in it filthily dirty.

I looked all over the house in daylight but could discern no holes in the walls, ceilings, nor any trace of the extensive

and elaborate machinery, which would have been required to produce the movements by ordinary mechanical means.

The history of the disturbances, as gathered from the various witnesses whom I interrogated, appears to be briefly as follows:—

Nothing remarkable had been seen or heard in the house until about the 20th or 21st February, 1883, when, as Mrs. White was alone with two of the children in the kitchen one evening, washing up the tea-things at the table, the table tilted up at a considerable angle; the candle was upset, and the washtub only saved by Mrs. W holding it. She positively assured me that she exerted no pressure whatever upon the table, and the whole incident struck her as very extraordinary. Her husband made light of it at the time.

On Monday, February 26th, White was absent from home until the Wednesday afternoon. On the Monday his wife allowed a girl, Eliza Rose, the child of an imbecile mother, and herself regarded as half-witted, to come into the house and share her bed at night. White returned on Wednesday night, but left on the following morning until Friday afternoon. During that one night the girl slept on the squab. On Thursday night, 1st March, at about 11 p.m. Tom White went up to bed—the children having gone up some hours before. At about 11:30, Mrs. White and Eliza Rose being then alone in the kitchen, various things, such as a corkscrew, clothes pegs, a salt cellar, etc., which had been in the kitchen only a few minutes before, came tumbling step by step down the kitchen stairs. Tom positively and solemnly denied having thrown the articles, and the mystery was increased when, at least 20 minutes after he had gone upstairs, no one having left the room in the interval, some *hot* coals were thrown down.

On the following night, the 2nd March, at about the same hour—White, Mrs. White, and Rose being in the kitchen—a noise was heard as of some one coming down the passage between the two houses, and stopping just outside the outer door. White told Rose to open the door, but she was too frightened to do so. Then they heard a surcingle and immediately afterwards some pieces of carpet thrown down the stairs. Then followed some knives and forks and other things. The girl picked them up; but they followed still faster. White then left the room to go up to Tom. During his absence one of the ornaments flew off the mantelpiece into the corner of the room near the door. Nothing was seen by the two women; but they heard it fall, and found it there. Their screams summoned White down; as he entered the room his candle went out, and something struck him on the forehead. The girl picked up the candle—which appears to have left the candlestick, and two new ones which had not been in the house previously—from the ground; and as soon as a candle was lit, a little china woman left the mantelpiece, and fell into the corner, where it was seen by White. As soon as it was replaced it flew across the room again, and was broken. Other things followed, and the women being very frightened, and White thinking that the

disturbances presaged the death of his child, who was very ill with an abscess in the back, sent Tom (who was afraid to go alone) with Ford to fetch the doctor. Mrs. White meanwhile took one of the children next door. Rose approached the inner room to fetch another, when things immediately began to fly about and smash themselves in that room. After this all appear to have been absent from the house for a short time. White then returned, with Higgs, a policeman, and, whilst they were alone in the kitchen, standing near the door, a glass jar flew out of the cupboard into the yard; a tumbler also fell from the chest of drawers in the kitchen when only Higgs was near it. Both went into the inner room, and found the chest of drawers there turned up on end and smashed. On their return they found Rose, Wass, and Tom White in the kitchen [? and Mrs. Wass], and all saw a cream jug, which Rose had just placed on the bin, fly four feet up in the air and smash on the floor. Dr. Lloyd and Mrs. White then entered, and in the presence of all these witnesses, a basin was seen to rise slowly from the bin—no persons being near it except Dr. Lloyd and Higgs. It touched the ceiling, and then fell suddenly to the floor, and was smashed. This was at 12 p.m. All then left except Tom White and his brother. The disturbances continued until about 2 a.m., when all grew quiet, and the Whites slept. At about 8 a.m., on Saturday, the 3rd, the disturbances began again.

White left the kitchen to attend to some pigs; and, in his absence, Mrs. White and Rose were left alone in the kitchen. A nearly empty port wine bottle leaped up from the table about four feet into the air, and fell into a bucket of milk, standing on the table, from which Mrs. White was filling some jugs, etc.

Then Currass appears to have been attracted to the scene. He entered with White, young Wass, and others, and viewed the inner room. They had but just returned to the kitchen, leaving the inner room empty, and the door of communication open, when the American clock, which hung over the bed, was heard to strike. (It had not done so for 18 months previously.) A crash was then heard, and Currass who was nearest the door, looked in, and found that the clock had fallen over the bed—about four feet broad—and was lying on the floor.* Shortly afterwards—no one being near it—a china dog flew off the mantelpiece, and smashed itself in the corner near the door. Currass and some others then left.

*It will be noted that there is a discrepancy between White's and Currass' version of this incident. Mrs. White, however, confirmed her husband's account; and I have little doubt that the statement in the text is substantially accurate. Currass is more likely than White to have been mistaken in his recollection of White's position at the time; and Currass' account of his own position does not differ greatly from that given by White. The material point, and one on which both witnesses are agreed, is that no one saw the clock fall. Currass' written statement is not clear on this point, but he told me *viva voce* that his attention was drawn to what had taken place by hearing the crash. He only then turned round and saw the clock lying on the floor.—F.P.

Some plates, a cream-jug, and other things, then flew up in the air, and smashed themselves in view of all who were in the kitchen—Rose, the Whites, and Mrs. Wass.

White then lay down on the sofa; but disturbances continued during his siesta. In particular, some pictures on the wall next the pantry began to move, but were taken down at once by his brother. At about 2 p.m. a Salvation Army woman came in, and talked to White. Rose only was with them in the kitchen. A candlestick flew from the bin, and fell behind the Salvation Army woman, as she stood near the pantry door. She left the room in terror.

Other things then followed at intervals. A full medicine bottle fell without breaking. An empty medicine bottle and a lamp-glass fell and broke themselves. It was then about 4 p.m., and White could stand it no longer. He told the girl she must go; she did in fact leave before 5 p.m. After her departure nothing whatever of an abnormal character took place, and the house has remained undisturbed up to the present time.

With regard to the positions of the persons present, in relation to the objects moved, it may be stated generally that there was no possibility in most cases of the objects having been thrown by hand. It will be seen... that the objects were frequently moved in a remote corner of the room, or even in an adjoining room. Moreover, the character of the movements, in many cases, was such as to preclude the possibility of the objects having been thrown.

Of course the obvious explanation of these occurrences is trickery on the part of some of the persons present. In regard to this, it seems to me a matter of very little significance that most of the educated people in Worksop believe White himself to have caused the disturbance. For most educated persons, as we know, would not be ready to admit any other than a mechanical explanation, and if such an explanation be adopted, White, the owner of the house, a man of considerable intelligence, whose record was not entirely clean, and who was himself present on the occasion of nearly all the disturbances, must obviously be the agent. But whilst believing White to be at the bottom of the matter, none of the persons with whom I conversed were prepared with any explanation of his *modus operandi*. That he should have thrown the things was universally admitted to be impossible. And beyond, I could discover little more than an unquestioning faith in the omnipotence of electricity. No one professed to have any idea of what mechanical means could have been employed, or how they could have been adapted to the end in view. Still less did anyone pretend to have discovered any indications in the house itself of any machinery having been used. Moreover, there was a total absence of any apparent motive on White's part, supposing him to have been capable of effecting the movements himself. Whilst he was unquestionably a considerable loser—to the extent of nearly £9 as estimated by himself, though this estimate is probably exaggerated—by the articles broken, he appears to have reaped no corresponding advantage. The one motive which I heard suggested—if

we disregard a report in one newspaper, subsequently contradicted in another, to the effect that White was anxious to buy the house, and to buy it cheap—was that he produced the disturbances in fulfilment of a sporting bet. But I saw no reason to regard this explanation as anything but a scholium evolved by some ingenious commentator from the facts themselves.

Again, had White himself been the principal agent in the matter, it is clear that he must have had at least two confederates, for he was not himself present during the disturbances on the Thursday night—which might, indeed, have been caused by his brother Tom—nor was either he or his brother present during some of the occurrences on the following day. Moreover, these confederates must not only have been extremely skilful, but they must have been capable of more than ordinary reticence and self-control. For it is remarkable that, with the single exception of the statements made by the girl Rose, no one professed to have heard even a hint from White himself, from his brother, or from any other, of any trickery in the matter.

Moreover, it is hard to conceive by what mechanical appliance, under the circumstances described, the movements could have been effected. The clock, for instance—a heavy American one—was thrust out from the wall in a horizontal direction, so as apparently to clear a 4 ft. bedstead which lay immediately beneath it, and the nail from which it depended remained *in situ* on the wall. The objects thrown about in the kitchen moved generally, but by no

means always, in the direction of the outer door. And it is noticeable that, in most cases, they do not appear to have been thrown, but in some manner borne or wafted across the room; for, though they fell on a stone floor 15 ft. or 16 ft. distant, they were often unbroken, and were rarely shattered. An it is impossible to reconcile the account given of the movement of some other objects, variously described as “jerky,” “twirling,” and “turning over and over,” with the supposition that the objects depended on any fixed support, or were in any way suspended.

Lastly, to suppose that these various objects were all moved by mechanical contrivances argues incredible stupidity, amounting almost to imbecility, on the part of all the persons present who were not in the plot. That the movement of the arms necessary to set the machinery in motion should have passed unobserved on each and every occasion by all the witnesses, is almost impossible. Not only so, but Currass, Higgs, and Dr. Lloyd, all independent observers, assured me that they examined some of the objects which had been moved, immediately after the occurrence, with the express intention of discovering, if possible, any clue to an explanation of the matter, but entirely failed to do so. These men were not over-credulous; they certainly were not wanting in intelligence; and they were not, any of them, prepossessed in favour of White. But they each admitted that they could discover no possible explanation of the disturbances, and were fairly bewildered by the whole matter.

April 11th, 1883.

Reviews

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

edited by Robert Kastenbaum

(New York: Springer Publishing Co., 1979. 184 pp. \$15.50 hardcover; \$9.95 softcover).

Reviewed by Gertrude R. Schmeidler

Dr. Schmeidler is Professor in the Department of Psychology, City College of the City University of New York.

This stimulating and enlightening book centers around near death experiences. Its nine essays by eight authors vary in their subject matter but are alike in their quality, which is good, and in their style, which is clear and interesting.

The first is a moving account by a psychologist, Ruderman, of his recovery from a cancer which, doctors agreed, would permit him at most two years of life. He resigned himself to death, but when his son was born resolved to stay alive so that he could help raise his child. Massive

surgery, massive radiation, repeated operations weakened him; none of his physicians expected him to survive them. He recounts the mystical out of body experiences where his own will seemed to bring about his recovery, and how these experiences changed his view of reality as well as his own personality. His history was worth recording, and we can hope there will be other similar accounts to which it can be compared.

The next article is a fine survey by the editor, Kastenbaum. He reviews sympathetically the near death experiences described by Kübler-Ross and Moody, where case after persuasive case seems to show that after anesthesia or apparently fatal injury, a person visited a world of life after death, then returned to this world. Kastenbaum then gives an equally sympathetic review of the arguments against accepting these cases at their face value. He cites the negative instances, of people who could have had these experiences but did not; and he raises the critical questions which must be considered in thinking through the meaning of what Kübler-Ross and Moody reported.

This is followed by a review by Ross of psychical research's studies of survival after death. It provides an excellent introduction to the contributions of F.W.H. Myers and William James, two giants of the period around 1900. Their work and thinking deserve all the space allotted to them, but it is disappointing that Ross tells so little of what was done in later generations. However the omission is rectified in the last chapter of the book, where Kastenbaum summarizes clearly and well both early and recent research on survival.

In the fourth chapter Garfield, a psychologist who counseled 215 terminal cancer patients, tells us that about a fifth of them entered altered states of consciousness: states which varied from terror as if they had been in contact with demons to calm acceptance of death because of the blissful certainty of a transcendent afterlife. He cites the work of Osis and Haraldsson, where physicians' and nurses' accounts of deaths they witnessed showed more detail about the diversity of such altered states. All this raises forcibly the question of what causes these differences among the dying, and the next article (by Kalish) cites provocative data which might well bear on the problem. A poll of 434 adults asked whether they believed they had had contact with the dead; and the frequency of their saying yes related to sex, age, and race. Kalish suggests, most reasonably, that the value system which a person holds can help determine whether or not the experience occurs.

The next article is a fascinating one. Noyes compiled the published reports of 205 persons who were in life-threatening danger, chiefly from drowning, falling, or automobile accidents. Two-thirds believed at the time that they would die; and these report more panoramic memories, sharper and more vivid images, and more feelings of joy and harmony than the other third. (Of the 26 descriptors listed, from "altered passage of time" to "thoughts blurred or dull," nine show significant differences between those who believed they would be killed and the others.) The statistical technique of factor analysis showed three major factors or dimensions along which the answers varied: mystical understanding (reminiscent of Bucke's cosmic consciousness); depersonalization (which could defend against fear of death); and hyperalertness (which of course could be life-saving).

For a research worker, the seventh chapter by Brent is alone worth the price of admission to the book—and for anyone, the chapter must surely tempt toward a do-it-yourself trial of what Brent describes. He gives in detail, with verbatim instructions, the procedure which resulted in 29 of the 30 college students in his class reporting that they had had an out of body experience (18 of them reporting they had gone out into space). In contrast the eighth chapter by Bertman is charming and appealing but irrelevant to scientific study. It compiles wide-ranging quotations from prose and poetry about communication with the dead.

The book seems to me to be excellent. Although I tried to be alert for flaws, I could find only three: the absence of references to the research by Ring which supports and ex-

tends Moody's findings; the absence of an index, and the varying percentages that Garfield reports. The editor deserves commendation for the readable style of every article and the wide variety of appropriate topics he has brought together. I would expect every reader, like myself, to find the book informative and interesting, and also to find it provocative of further thought.

SCIENCE OF PSI: ESP AND PK

by **Carroll B. Nash**

(Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1978. 280 pp + indices. \$16.95)

Reviewed by Diana Robinson

Diana Robinson is an independent researcher, a graduate student in experimental psychology, and a freelance writer.

Parapsychologists have been looking for (and trying to write) the parapsychological textbook for a long time. However, the body of literature on the subject has now grown to such a size that it is hardly possible for any one book to summarize the entire field. Authors of general parapsychological texts are forced either to select a few representative cases and experiments and discuss them in depth, or to mention a very large number of experiments and aspects of psychical research but give only a brief summary of each one. Nash has chosen the latter format.

The result is an extremely comprehensive text reflecting the vast knowledge that Nash, who independently started conducting PK experiments about the same time as Rhine without knowing of the Duke work, has accumulated in the last 40 years.

Starting with an erudite breakdown of forms of psi, Nash proceeds through an excellent chapter on the development of parapsychology to a discussion of techniques for measuring psi. This includes a very informative "condensed course" in statistics.

Chapter 4, "Counterhypotheses to Psi," summarizes the various criticisms that have been put forward to account for significant experimental results. Nash very briefly rebuts each of these, citing experimental reports by way of illustration but providing little or no information about these experiments.

The three following chapters are somewhat arbitrarily titled "The Target," "The Subject," and "The Agent and the Experimenter." The first includes paragraphs on distance, screening, time, high and low aim, physical and psychological characteristics of the target, test conditions, and a fine piece on P values for ESP tests which might have been better suited to the earlier section on statistics. In "The Subject," the relationship of psi to such variables as culture, race, sex, age and intelligence is discussed, as is

work on the development of psi ability. Various states of consciousness—meditation, dreams, hypnosis, drugs—are given brief paragraphs, each being reported as having a fairly clear effect on ESP scores. Aspects of the personality are also dealt with in this chapter.

Nash included both agent and experimenter in one very short chapter not only because the experimenter is often the agent (or 'sender') in ESP experiments, but also because the 'experimenter effect' automatically makes the experimenter a kind of agent in every experiment.

A longer and much stronger chapter on spontaneous psi follows, mixing historical material which will be familiar to many THETA readers with vivid examples from the author's files. Tyrrell's work on apparitions is summarized and the differences between dreams, impressions and hallucinations discussed. Somewhat surprisingly, poltergeist phenomena are not included in the section on spontaneous PK phenomena, which is confined to single, rather than repeated, events. ^{RSPK}

Nash wisely points out at the beginning of his chapter on psi in lower organisms that it is not yet known whether positive results in such experiments are the result of psi on the part of the organism or the experimenter. He mentions bird navigation and psi trailing as possible spontaneous examples, and goes on to summarize a number of ESP and PK experiments in which animals have been the subjects and others in which they have been the targets (as, for example in healing).

In the next two chapters Nash deals with ESP and PK phenomena which he deems questionable. Such a section is needed because psi seems to include many unproven loose ends which have to be mentioned somehow and yet which should not be included 'in the same breath' as the more reliable experimental work. However, some of the areas covered are also mentioned elsewhere in the book as though Nash considered them experimentally well authenticated.

Among the subjects included in these chapters are mediumship, dowsing, psychometry, out of body experiences, possession, haunting, reincarnation, psychic healing and surgery, metal bending, raps, psychic photography, teleportation, poltergeists, materialization, Kirlian photography and acupuncture. *

No doubt every reader will have his or her own point of view as to which of these are really questionable—and which are really psi! My own feeling is that the last two are clearly physical phenomena with no relation to the psychic. *
At the other extreme I was startled to find poltergeist phenomena relegated to the 'questionable' category in spite of Nash's comment that observations and videotapes of moving objects indicate that some are genuine. Other readers will probably feel the same way about OBE's, psychic healing, reincarnation, or metal bending, depending upon their particular orientation.

An excellent chapter on the characteristics of psi follows. It is perhaps unfortunate for the newcomer to the field that it is only here, on page 188, that psi-missing, which has been mentioned throughout, is actually explained in any

depth. In fact, so much of this chapter is so highly informative that I would recommend that anyone reading the book as an introduction to psi should read it between Chapters 3 and 4.

When it comes to theories of psi one can only survey the speculations put forward to date, which Nash does very well. However, I was surprised to see only seven lines accorded to Stanford's conformance model while six times that space was given to a discussion of UFO's and Extraterrestrial Intelligences in relation to psi.

As a source of knowledge of which experiments deal with which variables I feel that the book will be invaluable to many readers. However, I do question whether it is a suitable book to be used in an introductory course on parapsychology, particularly where the students are undergraduates. A major drawback to the format that Nash has used is that very few of the experiments mentioned are covered in any depth, and at times they are summarized so briefly as to be oversimplified to a fault. Though Chapter 4 deals with counter-hypotheses in general, few counter-hypotheses are offered for the results of experiments cited in the rest of the book, and the impression is given that the results of almost every experiment are clearly significant, evidential, unambiguous, and have not been contradicted by other research. This is often not the case.

For example, when discussing visualization (p. 104) Nash cites the Honorton, Tierney & Torres study which found a positive correlation between vividness of visualization and ESP scores. He does not mention studies by Pleshette or Schechter, Solfvin & McCollum which found negative correlations between vividness of visualization and ESP scores.

In experiments in which Randall tried to influence the direction in which woodlice crawled out of a dish, Randall originally set a critical ratio of 2.0 as the criterion for significance. The results had a critical ratio of 1.8, but Nash cites the experiment as significant without qualification (p. 141).

Rhine's alcohol and caffeine experiments were clearly titled 'exploratory' when first published in 1945, and hindsight tells us that the results may well have been influenced by the subjects' very obvious expectations, but, again, they are cited as significant without any discussion (pp. 111-112).

The field is just not as simple and straightforward as Nash makes it appear.

There is a very real danger that after reading this book, and particularly the chapter on experimental and statistical procedures, some enthusiastic young people with a potential future in parapsychology will believe that they are equipped to start a research project. However, in describing experimental and statistical techniques, Nash pays scant attention to the questions of why and when specific procedures should or should not be used. To spend time and effort on a project, only to find that completely inappropriate statistical analyses or experimental methods had been used, could too easily lead to disillusion and a loss of interest in the field. Before investing time and energy in a research

project, young people should be made far more aware of the complexities of parapsychological experimentation than they will be after reading this book alone.

In spite of this carping, I believe that *Science of Psi: ESP and PK* is an extremely useful book, both for researchers and for *some* students. As a source book for the researcher,

for the instructor who is designing a course in parapsychology (provided he or she is somewhat familiar with the field, which is not always the case) and for the graduate or senior student with a background in statistics and experimental methods I recommend it most heartily.

Theta Forum

May I be allowed to answer some of the points raised in Dr. Stevenson's *THETA FORUM* [re: E.W. Ryall's *Second Time Round*, in Vol. 7, No. 4, 1979], and may I say that neither this present letter nor its predecessor [*THETA*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1978] is written in my capacity as Editor of the Journal and Proceedings of a body which has no collective opinions. I write, now as then, as a private individual.

Now to those points.

1. Were the vicar and the farmer consulted about "John Fletcher's" curious matrimonial arrangements, historians? Folk memory over nearly 200 years—five or six generations—is not infallible. The point is not that "licensed adultery" has been known to happen and continues to happen; but whether it happened in 17th century Somerset between a man and his sister-in-law (which would have been considered incestuous. There was a tremendous row some two centuries later over a Bill permitting a man to marry his *deceased* wife's sister!)

2. Food. Though Pepys in London ate fricassees with relish, this does not mean they were consumed in the countryside. There were profound differences between London and rural England, which only began to disappear with the coming of the railways. News, manners and customs spread very slowly indeed; no radio, no television provided uniformity. Journeys took many days. There was strong local feeling and resistance to "foreign" influence; and "foreign" might mean someone from a village 10 miles off. It is unlikely that even the gentry would have eaten made up French dishes, despised as "kickshaws" (*quelques choses*) and most improbably that yeoman farmers would. Not till the times of Rowlandson and Cobbett did they begin to "ape their betters."

Making syllabub again raises the question of local language and local knowledge today between one side of the Atlantic and the other. Clotted cream (also known as Cornish cream or Devonshire cream) is automatically sterilized by boiling, (not brief pasturization). Milk is boiled; the cream forms a skin, the skin is skimmed off and put layer by layer in a big bowl. The accumulated product is clotted cream, and very good it is.

Syllabub is made by whipping fresh—not sour—cream with wine or lemon juice and sugar, and leaving the result to stand over night in a cool place. Next day a sweet, creamy curd will have formed over a slightly, very slightly, acid whey.

Yoghurt is a milk preparation already soured by the addition of a special bacillus. If beaten up with wine or lemon juice its distinctive sourness will be sourer still (unlike syllabub, which retains a delicious taste of cream). Perhaps we should congratulate Dr. Stevenson's helpers on inventing a new delicacy. One might call it yoghabub.

In England sour milk (known in Germany—and perhaps in America—as "thick milk") is made into cottage cheese, and sour cream into cream cheese.

As to simnel cake I stand condemned by the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*; may I plead in mitigation that I have never personally heard of its being eaten except on Mothering Sunday in mid-Lent, and that there are various current folk tales explaining how this came about.

3. Language. It is interesting to know that Mr. Ryall was detached enough from his "far memories" to write them down in that distressing fake-antique English which was the bane of so many Victorian historical novels.

4. My informant as to Enclosures round Weston Zoyland saw a large scale plan prepared by Mr. Ryall, and discussed it with the local authority on Enclosures. I hope that, pressure of work permitting, he may in future publish his findings. Incidentally, it still seems to me surprising and significant that no such family as Fletcher is to be found in the very well kept records of the district at the time.

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Dr. Stevenson has seen Miss Haynes' reply and prefers not to comment further at this time on the points she raised, except to say that the syllabub prepared with the clotted milk at the University of Virginia was not at all sour, but deliciously sweet. Dr. Stevenson expects to publish in the future a further and much more detailed analysis of criticisms of *Second Time Round*.

Letters

In response to Edgar Wirt's letter requesting information re: temperature effects, *THETA*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Winter, 1980. Prof. Z.W. Wolkowski (*Journal of Paraphysics*, Vol. 10, 1/2) reports the ability of Jean Pierre Girard to cause a rise in temperature of 4°C. by concentrating his gaze upon liquid crystals at a distance of 1.5 meters. R.D. Mattuck (Denmark) reported, in the 2nd International Congress on Psychotronic Research (Monte Carlo 1975, summarized in *Journal of Paraphysics*, Vol. 9, 4/5), a rise of 5°C. induced by a girl language student, as registered by a clinical thermometer, while she held the end of the thermometer opposite to the mercury bulb.

It is interesting that the opposite effect is observed in some haunted sites—a fall instead of a rise in temperature, as if energy is being abstracted from the environment. We wished to know what happens to this withdrawn energy. Accordingly, a team from the Paraphysical Laboratory investigated the alleged "haunted wing" of Sanford Orcas Manor, Dorset, England.

Firstly, it should be pointed out that there appear to be two broad classes of hauntings: (1) person-oriented; if the poltergeist agent, whose bio-field is presumably the operative factor, moves to another house, the phenomena naturally follow him there and nothing more happens in the house he or she has left; and (2) place-oriented; in which the phenomena remain in one house whoever moves in or out. Having interviewed various groups of people who had independently occupied the Manor at different periods, unknown to each other, and finding that they all reported similar types of phenomena in the haunted wing, we came to the conclusion that the paranormal events (movements of objects, unusual sounds, etc.) were place-oriented, and perhaps independent of living humans.

In order to check this, we sealed up the haunted wing which remained devoid of living people including ourselves, having first installed a number of instruments in the "most haunted" room of the wing, recording temperature, humidity, air pressure, electrical state, infrared and visible light, and also a microphone to pick up sounds. All these instruments were linked by wires to a control observation post fifty feet away where we remained all night watching our recording apparatus.

In the presence of humans, control conditions are impossible—each person emits warm, moist breath, each movement produces electrical charges or causes creaks in floorboards misinterpreted as "raps." Thermal convection currents perpetually rise from the human body creating random air motion. Sensations of skin temperature changes can be due to physiological factors—cigarette smoking or a cramped position can alter blood flow—and psychological factors—suggestion, fear, etc. In short, humans are unreli-

able instruments for observation as their own bodies can create spurious phenomena, quite apart from the possibility of visual and auditory illusions or hallucinations.

We were particularly interested in the period between midnight and 3 a.m. when most of the phenomena appeared to take place—the so-called "witching hour of midnight" when the whole earth lies between us and the sun, putting electromagnetic disturbance at a minimum (no cars or radio stations) and so rendering easier the detection of paranormal effects. We commenced our observations at 8 p.m. and continued until well after dawn.

Electrical thermometers shielded from draughts had been positioned in the haunted room, and a second set of thermometers were placed in adjoining rooms. Windows and fireplaces were blocked and other precautions taken, e.g., cloth inserted under doors. The object was to ascertain if any differences in temperature took place between the thermometers inside and outside the haunted room.

All thermometers registered the usual night-time dip between dusk and dawn, and before 12 p.m. and after 3 a.m. both sets behaved identically. But between 12 p.m. and 3 a.m., the thermometers within the room dipped lower than those outside, by approximately 1°C. We disturbed them only once, at 2 a.m. to interchange the two sets of thermometers in case of malfunction, but those inside were still cooler. In the same period, the microphone picked up inexplicable sounds, while nothing was heard outside the period.

Now if the temperature of all objects in a room falls by 1°C., it is simple to calculate that the thermal energy represented, if converted into mechanical energy, would be sufficient to disturb even heavy furniture. From this, we surmised that poltergeist influences utilize thermal energy to produce their physical effects. But this implies a local "entropy-inversion" which normally is associated only with living organisms. It does not follow, of course, that a poltergeist is in any way associated with a deceased human; but in proving survival, it is a necessary first step to ensure that living humans are excluded. This type of investigation is therefore of fundamental importance in survival research, and many more such investigations are needed. The Paraphysical Laboratory is situated in the West Country which is particularly rich in haunted sites. Unfortunately we were unable to continue further with this line of research due to the impossibility of securing adequate funding, as our current research grants are only sufficient to enable us to pursue our main ongoing research into psychic healing.

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THETA, Vol. 8, No. 2, Spring, 1980, carried a review of Rogo and Bayless' Phone Calls From The Dead, written by W.E. Cox. There is one error which involves me that I would appreciate having corrected.

It is correct, that as far as I can determine, Karl Uphoff is not my "second cousin"; but not the next sentence, "Nor does Uphoff recall reporting a case of his own (pp. 38-39) to the author's informant."

The case of a phone call to Glen Hedgecock, Boulder, Colorado, purporting to be from my recently (at the time) deceased secretary, was reported in our book, *New Psychic Frontiers*, published by Colin Smythe, Ltd., England. It prompted Raymond Bayless to write to me about getting in touch with Hedgecock to verify the incident. Bayless did contact Hedgecock, who confirmed the report of the incident.

Since the Roseheim case (Germany) is referred to, it might be of interest to readers to know that the local phone exchange registered over 500 phone calls which were never made—all to the number which gave the correct time of day. The attorney, Adams, in whose office Annemarie Schaibel (considered to be the active agent) worked, refused to pay the phone bill and that brought the case to public attention,

after which it was thoroughly investigated by Dr. Hans Bender, the physicist Friedbert Karger, and others. The electronic phone mechanism was presumably affected by PK related to the emotional state of the agent, which seemed to trigger many other poltergeist activities.

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In re: *Phone Calls From The Dead* review, thanks for the correction about Walter Uphoff's personal experience. Appreciated, too, is his added information on the 500 "time" calls. What next, one wonders!

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Reviews In Brief

REVIEWED BY JOHN McALLISTER

THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, Vol. 74, No. 3, July 1980, 319-329. The American Society for Psychical Research, Inc., 5 West 73rd Street, New York, NY 10023.

"Kinetic Effects at the Ostensible Location of an Out-of-Body Projection During Perceptual Testing," by Karlis Osis and Donna McCormick.

This report concerns the possibility of registrable physical effects at the location of an out-of-body (OB) projection. The authors point out that fundamental questions about OB processes are mostly unanswered. For example, does anything really leave the physical body in OB projection, or does "ordinary" ESP account for verifiable perceptions? Or again, as the authors hypothesize here, is the OB experience an ever-changing process rather than an all-or-none phenomenon? In this experiment the subject, Alex Tanous, was requested to go out-of-body into a shielded chamber which contained strain-gauge sensors. His overt task was to identify randomly selected visual targets, displayed in an optical image device behind a viewing window. Unintentional mechanical effects on the sensors were registered on a polygraph during the times when Alex was trying to identify the targets. The authors suggest this is the first experimental attempt to couple an overt perceptual task, which requires highly localized viewing, with the registration of unintentional mechanical effects at the location where an OB projection is said to be stationed. Their tentative opinion is that the results of this experiment can most likely be attributed to Alex' OB presence in the shielded chamber.

THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, Vol. 74, No. 3, July 1980, pp. 331-348. The American Society for Psychical Research, Inc., 5 West 73rd Street, New York, NY 10023.

"A Preliminary Report on an Unusual Case of the Reincarnation Type with Xenoglossy," by Ian Stevenson and Satwant Pasricha.

The authors discuss a case that is unique in their experience of cases suggestive of reincarnation. This case developed six years ago when the subject, Miss Uttara Huddar, was 32 years old. At that time in Uttara's life a new personality emerged, calling herself Sharada, who claimed to live in Bengal, more than 1200 kilometres from Nagpur. Sharada remained in control initially for several weeks and intermittently since that time in phases lasting from one day to about six weeks. Many significant differences were noted between Uttara in her normal state and Sharada. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the Sharada personality could not speak Uttara's native language Marathi, but instead spoke fluent Bengali of a sort typical of the early 19th century. The authors believe that Uttara, although she had some knowledge of Hindi, Sanskrit and English, had not learned to speak Bengali of any kind prior to the manifestations of Sharada, although a) Uttara previously had shown a strong interest in Bengal and its people, and b) Uttara previously had been taught some Bengali script. The authors conclude that the facts of this case seem best explained by supposing that Uttara has had memories of the life of an early 19th century Bengali woman.

Perspectives

The Shaking Tent: Direct Observation of Psychokinesis

David Read Barker

Across a broad arc from Tibet through northeastern Siberia, Alaska and the Great Lakes to the woodlands of Newfoundland, shamans were the primary magio-religious practitioners of diverse indigenous peoples prior to the arrival of industrialized peoples. The numerous common features of shamanistic performances in this huge geographic region were noted more than 60 years ago but still remain unexplained. The most dramatic feature of the shamanistic performance is the often violent shaking of a lodge or "tent" constructed of stout poles and covered with hides, within which the shaman crouches during his seance. Many reliable witnesses, among them the great American anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell, have published reports describing "shaking tent" ceremonies. These reports, taken as a whole, constitute the largest and most authentic body of anecdotes of psychokinesis in the anthropological literature.

Shamanism is an institutionalized means of obtaining the help of spirit entities by invoking their presence and communicating human desires to them. Through bequest and personal power, shamans gain limited control over spirit "familiar" who enable the shamans to: diagnose and cure disease, attain success in battle, bring (or stop) rain and

storms, locate missing persons or objects, and foretell the future. The institution has almost completely vanished; shamans were among the first people singled out by missionaries as practitioners of fraud and deceit. And yet, even after years of conversion to Christianity, shamans have died asserting the authenticity of the supernatural powers accorded them by familiar spirits.

The lodge or "tent" of an Ojibwa shaman in Manitoba was constructed of six stout poles and about nine feet long and two and one-half inches in diameter, driven one and one-half feet into the ground. The lodge was five feet in diameter and seven feet high. Hallowell saw the lodge "agitate" and "jump."

Serious observational hindrances occur because shamans, as sacred practitioners, are typically unwilling to permit automatic film records of their performances. Confined in a small space out of sight of those attending, and often performing at night, there can be little doubt that most, if not all, shamans practice sleight-of-hand and ventriloquism to heighten the effect of their actions. The record of good observers, however, is that apparently paranormal events are associated with these performances.

Books Received

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