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A BULLETIN FOR RESEARCH ON THE PROBLEM OF SURVIVAL AFTER BODILY DEATH
PUBLISHED BY THE PSYCHICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION, INC., EDITED BY W. G. ROLL

INVESTIGATIONS OF "HAUNTINGS" AND "POLTERGEISTS"

Among the puzzling events that take place in the world, few stir peoples' curiosity and imagination as much as "haunting" and "poltergeist" phenomena. Parapsychologists investigate them because, if genuine, they seem to involve high-powered psychical energies and in some cases, theta agents. The events are commonly connected with a certain area, usually a house, and consist of repeated, unexplained disturbances such as the movements of furniture and household objects or in hallucinatory experiences, such as seeing "ghosts." Physical disturbances predominate in poltergeist incidents; hallucinatory experiences in hauntings. Like other popular terms, these assume unproven theories: that the objects are tossed about by a rattling (German: "poltern") spirit ("geist"); or that the experiences are caused by a spirit returned to a former habitat ("haunt" derives from the same root as "home"). The more neutral phrase, "recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis," or RSPK, is now generally used to describe poltergeist-type disturbances.

As in other research, a distinction can be drawn between an exploratory stage and the confirmatory follow-up. The latter requires familiarity with scientific methods and previous investigations.¹ The initial steps can be taken by anyone who gains the confidence of the people in the case and knows the right questions to ask. A questionnaire, developed for this purpose, is printed here.

The persons around whom the events occur are often reluctant to discuss them with strangers unless offered advice for

dealing with the disturbances. It is best if the interviewer is connected with a responsible research organization.²

Studies of RSPK and haunting disturbances are threatened by two enemies, time and publicity. Several promising cases have been abandoned because publicity attracted crowds of curiosity-seekers to the area. The investigator must try to prevent publicity, at least till a scientific examination has been made. Reporters who learn about an investigation while it is in progress may be persuaded to postpone publication till it is over if they are promised that a statement will then be available. It is in their interest that the scientific study should be completed since this will make the case more "newsworthy." Particularly the more violent physical disturbances are nearly always short-lived, and if intensive research is to be undertaken, the pilot survey must be done quickly. Whenever possible, communications with the people involved should be face to face; otherwise, by telephone rather than correspondence.

The following questionnaire was developed with the help of Dr. J. G. Pratt, President of the Psychical Research Foundation. Its main purpose is to determine whether a case deserves personal study and if so, what form this should take. The questionnaire is divided into five parts. The first concerns general background information; the second, localization of the occurrences; the third, physical disturbances; the fourth, non-physical disturbances; and the fifth, prospects for further investigations.

¹ For instance, see "The Seaford Disturbances" by J. G. Pratt and W. G. Roll, *Journal of Parapsychology*, Vol. 22, June, 1958, 79-124; and "Quantitative Investigation of a 'Haunted' House" by Gertrude Schmeidler, *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, Vol. 60, April, 1966, 137-149.

² The Psychical Research Foundation, Inc., College Station, Durham, N. C., is likely to sponsor interviews if contacted by letter or phone. Collect calls will be accepted by W. G. Roll at 919-489-6268.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RECURRING UNEXPLAINED DISTURBANCES

GENERAL BACKGROUND

(1) Where have the disturbances taken place?

(2) When did the disturbances begin?

(3) How recently has anything happened?

(4) How does the frequency and severity at this time compare with earlier periods?

(5) Who are the members of the household or group involved? What are their ages?

(6) Have any of the persons who witnessed the phenomena had telepathic dreams or other psychical experiences in the past? If so, state who and describe the experiences.

(7) Were any of the persons who witnessed the phenomena interested in psychical matters before the present disturbances began? If so, indicate their areas of interest.

(8) Have attempts been made to find an ordinary explanation of the events? For example, is there reason to think that someone is doing these things as a prank or that they could be due to settling of the house, rodents, etc.?

(9) Are there pets or farm animals in the area? If so, how do they react to the disturbances?

(10) Have any visitors to the house or area witnessed the disturbances? If so, are they willing to testify? (Give names and addresses of such persons.)

(11) Do you or others who witnessed the phenomena have any idea or theory about their cause?

LOCALIZATION OF PHENOMENA

(12) Are events more frequent at certain times during the twenty-four hours of the day than at others? If so, state which periods.

(13) Are they more frequent in certain places (for example, in certain rooms of the house) than in others? If so, state where.

(14) Do the occurrences happen more frequently in the presence or vicinity of certain persons than others? If so, state whom. Do events take place when they are not in the area?

(15) Has anything been known to happen when no one was in the area?

PHYSICAL DISTURBANCES

Answer Questions 16-23 Only if There Are Physical Disturbances (such as Unexplained Movements of Objects).

(16) Describe these disturbances.

(17) How frequent are the disturbances?

(18) If there have been unexplained movements of objects, was there anything strange about the manner in which the objects moved or stopped (for example, objects that moved around corners, hit with unusually great force, etc.)?

(19) Are unusually loud noises caused by the moving of objects? If so, describe these noises.

(20) Are there noises not connected with the disturbances of objects? If so, describe these noises.

(21) Has anyone ever seen an object start to move when no one was near it? If so, describe these occurrences.

(22) Have things happened when no one was in the area or room in which the disturbances took place? If so, describe the occurrences.

(23) Are special objects or kinds of objects disturbed more often than others? If so, which?

NON-PHYSICAL PHENOMENA

Answer Questions 24-29 Only if There Are Unusual Phenomena not Caused by the Movements of Objects or by Other Physical Disturbances (for Instance, if There Are "Ghosts," "Footsteps," Sensations of Heat and Cold, Unexplained Sounds, Lights, Smells, and Touches).

(24) Describe these experiences.

(25) How frequent are these experiences?

(26) Who first noticed them and when?

(27) What other persons, if any, have had these experiences and when did they have them?

(28) Were the people who had these experiences aware that others had had such experiences in the area before they did?

(29) Have there been instances where the ghost, footsteps, etc., were experienced by some persons in the room or area but

not by others? If so, describe these cases.

FUTURE INVESTIGATION

(30) Would the family or group welcome a scientific investigation of the disturbances by someone who could make firsthand observations?

(31) Has there been any publicity about the event? If not, can you be reasonably sure of not letting any get started?

(32) If things are relatively inactive at this time and the prospects for a visit uncertain, will you telephone us collect at once if the events become more active?

CURRENT PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES, ESSAYS IN HONOR OF CURT JOHN DUCASSE

Edited by F. C. Dommeyer¹

Reviewed by Marshall Spector²

Professor Ducasse's interest in the survival problem is, or should be, well known to workers in the field. To mention one example of this interest, there is his latest book, *A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Life after Death*, published in 1961 by Charles C Thomas. But as the title of the present book should suggest, any one who expects to find papers dealing directly with survival research will be disappointed. Professor Ducasse is, after all, primarily a philosopher, and the thirteen essays in this collection deal mainly with issues of interest to philosophers.

There are three papers, however, which are at least indirectly relevant to the survival hypothesis, and one short paper by H. H. Price which is directly relevant. I shall briefly say what these four papers are about, and then just list the other nine.

Price, in a paper entitled "The Expressive Theory of the Mind-Body Relation," argues that the apparently uncontroversial claim that "anyone who believes that there is a life after death must apparently accept a dualistic theory of human personality" is false. This is the view that "a living human being is a compound of two entities or continuants, a mind (or soul) . . . and a physical organism . . . [and] that these two entities interact . . . so long as the physical organism remains alive; and that when the physical organism dies, this interaction comes to an end (or rather, perhaps, that

dying just *is* the permanent cessation of this interaction)." Price maintains that belief in a life after death does not imply belief in this dualistic view. There is a kind of monistic theory of the mind-body relation, he says, which also allows the "possibility of some sort of survival after death." It is important to realize this, he believes, because the dualistic theory described "is nowadays rejected by the majority of Western educated people." The version of monism outlined by Price, which he calls an "expressive theory" (and which resembles what Ducasse calls "Hypophenomenalism" in the book mentioned above) holds that mental processes must be "expressed" by or through a body, but that this body need not be spatial in the ordinary sense—"a space quite other than the space of the physical world" will do just as well.

Brand Blanshard, in "A Verdict on Epiphenomenalism," argues against the view that mental events cannot be causally efficacious (epiphenomenalism). Believers in survival will probably want to agree, and will, I suspect, find his arguments very persuasive; but it seems to me that he has not taken into account some important recent work on the mind-body problem. I mention one paper: "Minds and Machines," by Hilary Putnam, in a book by the same name (Prentice-Hall, 1964).

Those who have been badgered by "hard-headed" scientists who claim that the

¹ Springfield, Illinois: Charles C Thomas, 1966, 262 pp., \$8.75.

² Dr. Spector is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Duke University, Durham, N. C.

survival hypothesis is "unverifiable" or "nonsense" will find ammunition for a reply in Alice Ambrose's "Metamorphoses of the Principle of Verifiability." She shows how the original rather dogmatic statements of this principle have been successively modified and weakened in the face of criticism over the past thirty years. Unfortunately, many scientists seem not to be aware of this philosophical development, and still proclaim some of the early "operationist" dogmas of P. W. Bridgman and others.

In "Ducasse on 'Cause'—Another Look," Ronald E. Santoni critically examines Ducasse's view that the ordinary use of causal verbs shows the perception not only of causes and their effects, but also of *causation* itself. This view is usually rejected by contemporary philosophers of science. Santoni argues that Ducasse has not made a good case for it. It is worthwhile following his arguments and looking up some of his references. The concept

of causality is, after all, at the center of many *a priori* arguments for and against the very possibility of survival.

Other papers in the volume are: "Standpoint Commitments and the Function of Philosophy," by Marvin Farber; "Understanding Philosophy," by Morris Lazerowitz; "Perception and Sensation as Presentational," by Charles A. Baylis; "The Principles of Epistemic Appraisal," by Roderick M. Chisholm; "Desires as Causes of Actions," by A. I. Melden; "Pictures and Maps," by Vincent Tomas; "The Riddle of God and Evil," by Edward H. Madden; "A New Look at the Problem of Evil," by Charles Hartshorne; and "Free Will, the Creativity of God, and Order," by Peter A. Bertocci.

Many of the papers begin with pleasant reminiscences about Ducasse and there is a long list of his publications, including many dealing with problems in psychical research.

NEUROPSYCHIATRY JOURNAL DEVOTES NUMBER TO ESP

The October, 1966, issue of the *International Journal of Neuropsychiatry*,¹ entitled "ESP Status in 1966," is devoted to ESP and related topics.

The fifteen papers are divided into five sections: "Surveys of the Findings and Their Implications" has papers by Dr. Gardner Murphy, Sir Cyril Burt, and Dr. J. G. Pratt; "Psychological Dimensions of ESP" contains reports by Dr. G. R. Schmeidler, Professor Hans Bender, Professor W. H. C. Tenhaeff, and a joint paper by Drs. Montague Ullman and Stanley Krippner and Mr. Sol Feldstein; in "Physiological and Physical Relations" Mr. E. Douglas Dean, Dr. H. K. Puharich, and a team of Dutch investigators, Drs. S. R. van Asperen de Boer, P. R. Barkema, and J. Kappers, describe their research efforts; "Toward an Explanation" has articles by Dr. C. T. Tart and Mr. W. G. Roll; and in "The Voices of the Critics," Dr. J. C. Crumbaugh, Dr. R. K. Greenbank and Professor F. C. Dommeyer review and evaluate the objections that have been raised against psychical research.

The two hundred pages which make up this issue provide an excellent introduction to parapsychology, its achievements and problems. The reports cover work in Great Britain, Germany, Holland, Russia, and Czechoslovakia, as well as the U.S. They include accounts of studies of the relationship between ESP and motivation, memory, neurophysiological responses, electrical fields, dreams, and drugs. The survival issue is brought in by Sir Cyril Burt who concludes that "the psychiatrist, whatever his own personal beliefs, is no longer justified in denying at least a possibility for the hope or faith his patients may cherish."

The editorial team, headed by Dr. A. I. Jackman, is to be complimented on bringing this material to the attention of their colleagues. The managing editor, Mrs. Irene F. Hughes, played an important role in arranging this issue. Her efforts in other areas of the field are already known to THETA readers (THETA 12 and 15).

¹Copies of the *Journal* can be obtained by sending \$2.50 to RESEARCH IN ORGANIC PSYCHIATRY, INC., 8 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 514, Chicago, Illinois, 60603.