

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

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## PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL CONVENTION IN NEW YORK

The eighth annual convention of the Parapsychological Association was held at the Barbizon-Plaza Hotel, New York City, September 9-11. On the first day, Dr. K. R. Rao, President of the Association for 1965, gave his presidential address on "The Bidirectionality of Psi." Dr. Rao is now in the process of establishing a parapsychological center at Andhra University, India, where he plans to study the supposed psi abilities of yogas. Later in the day, convention participants attended a supper at the Newark College of Engineering and saw the computer center and the plethysmograph laboratory of the Psi Communications Project. This is headed by Professor John Mihalasky, with Mr. Douglas Dean as senior researcher.

The invited dinner speaker was Dr. Louisa E. Rhine who gave an address on the second day of the convention entitled "Toward Understanding Psi-Missing." The convention concluded with a presentation by Dr. Montague Ullman, Director of Psychiatry at Maimonides Hospital, New York, and his associates, Drs. Stanley Krippner and S. Feldstein, in which they described their ESP tests with dreaming subjects. The following papers were concerned with the study of "mediums" or touched in other ways on the survival question.

### AN EEG STUDY OF "ESP PROJECTION"

C. T. Tart

Dr. Tart, now at the University of Virginia, described an exploratory investigation at Stanford University, California, of a 20-year-old woman who repeatedly had the experience of leaving her body at night and "floating" to the ceiling. In the tests, a five-digit number was chosen randomly and placed on a shelf about three feet above the subject's bed. She was instructed

to look at this number if she felt she had left the body. EEG ("brain wave") measurements were taken while she slept. The fourth night she reported having floated up to the ceiling and seen the number; she called all five digits correctly and in the correct order. At the time she had the experience, there was an unusual EEG effect (characterized by a slow alpha rhythm). This also appeared on four occasions during the first three nights when the subject felt that she left her body, but not high enough to see the target.

### TOKEN OBJECT MATCHING TESTS

W. G. Roll

In the effort to reach an understanding of the function of the "psychometric" object which mediums often use to contact ostensible theta agents, the tests with Mrs. Marie Hazen were continued and extended to include another sensitive, Mrs. Shirley Harrison.

In preparation for the experiments, pairs of blank cards in airtight polyethylene covers were distributed to four target persons (TP's) and kept by them for a period of time. Four pairs of cards were kept in the factory box in which they arrived till shortly before the experiment and then they, too, were placed in polyethylene bags. Before the test, the cards were removed from the bags and separated. The subject was asked to match the two cards that belonged to the same pair. The cards were enclosed in envelopes and no one present at the experiment knew which cards belonged together. In preliminary trials with Mrs. Hazen, high scores were produced on the cards of one of the TP's (R.K.) but not on the others. This finding was repeated in another experiment with Mrs. Hazen and in two experiments with Mrs. Harrison. In each case the results were higher than could

be expected by chance. The findings were consistent with the theory that the matching was done on the basis of similarities in the cards' "psi fields," due to their association with the same TP. The procedure did not exclude the possibility that the subjects learned which cards belonged to the same pair by telepathy or clairvoyance from the mind or records of the experimental assistant who had this information.

### STATISTICAL STUDIES OF A "GHOST"

G. R. Schmeidler

An interesting and original contribution to theta research was made by Dr. Schmeidler, Professor of Psychology at the City College of the University of New York, in her study of a "haunted house."

The house, located in New York, was occupied by a family of four, three of whom thought it was haunted. Dr. Schmeidler made a floor plan of the house, divided it into squares of four-by-four feet, and asked the family to mark the haunted

places. She then obtained the cooperation of nine mediums. While the family was away, each medium was taken through the house by an assistant who did not know which areas were supposed to be haunted. The mediums were given an unmarked copy of the plan and asked to indicate the haunted parts. Their responses were compared with the family's by means of a standard statistical test. Two mediums gave statistically significant results. In addition, the family was asked to describe the "ghost's" personality by filling in a psychological checklist which the mediums also filled in. Four mediums had impressions of the ghost which corresponded with the family's.

Schmeidler emphasized that it is not yet possible to choose decisively between three hypotheses: (1) the family and mediums were influenced by common preconceptions about ghostly habitat or personality; (2) the mediums responded by ESP to the family's impressions of their alleged ghost; and (3) they responded to a ghost.

### SYMPOSIUM ON "WHAT NEXT IN SURVIVAL RESEARCH?" CONCLUDING SECTION

Abstracts of the invited symposium papers were presented in THETA 4-8. Eight of the papers were printed in full in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychological Research* (April, July, and October, 1965 issues).

In the final section we summarize the discussions of these papers by Drs. J. G. Pratt and Robert Binkley. Dr. Pratt reviews the four papers which deal primarily with research ideas and Dr. Binkley, the four whose emphasis is theoretical and philosophical. Following this, are abstracts of two contributions from readers, Mr. Douglas Dean and Mr. George Zorab, and concluding remarks by W. G. Roll. These five final papers will be printed in full in the January and April, 1966 issues of the *A.S.P.R. Journal*.

### COMMENTS ON PAPERS EMPHASIZING METHODS OF RESEARCH

J. G. Pratt

Dr. Pratt sees the papers as illustrating the current renewal of interest in survival

body" experiences may provide a means of checking the reality of the ostensible theta agents sometimes encountered during these experiences.

Pratt is sympathetic to the view stressed by Stevenson, that all our psychological knowledge and insight is needed to furnish the conditions that may govern a theta agent's ability to communicate. We should apply "procedural safeguards in a manner that is consistent with the occurrence of the phenomena. Any method that inhibits or destroys the phenomena it is designed to investigate would be worse than useless."

### PHILOSOPHY AND THE SURVIVAL HYPOTHESIS

Robert Binkley

The attitude of Dr. Binkley, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Duke University, is that the concept of survival after death is sufficiently clear from a philosophical point of view and that the main emphasis should be on actual research. Once the results are in, "the concepts will take care of themselves, or largely so." He thus disagrees with Dommeyer who feels that further philosophical clarification of the concept of survival is required and with Murphy, who says that we need a resolution of the body-mind problem. Binkley is more in harmony with Scriven, who shows that our idea of personal identity is so flexible it can adapt to almost any facts that survival research may turn up. He reviews the five positions listed by Wheatley concerning survival, from the view that it is logically impossible to the view that it is logically possible and empirically certain. To these he adds a sixth position according to which survival is logically or metaphysically necessary and cites Plato and St. Thomas Aquinas as adherents of it. The papers by Murphy and Scriven suggest ways of disposing of the first position and the sixth long ago succumbed to philosophical criticism. The task of research is to determine which of the remaining alternatives to choose. In conclusion, Binkley repeats Murphy's remark that "whether we like the answer or not, the discovery of powerful mediums is our most immediate task."

### SURVIVAL RESEARCH AND ESP ALTERNATIVES

E. Douglas Dean

Mr. Dean bases his suggestion for a theta experiment on the fact that the ESP abilities of some subjects appear to be restricted in certain ways. For instance, Basil Shackleton, the subject of S. G. Soal, the English researcher, was incapable of clairvoyance, that is, ESP of physical events. He was highly successful in telepathy, including precognitive telepathy, but only to the extent of calling the cards immediately before the agent looked at them. If we used such a subject in a theta experiment and eliminated the possibility of telepathy of the minds of people who knew the communicator by selecting one who had been dead for a long time, we should have a survival test. Supposing that in such a test the subject made a statement, ostensibly from a deceased communicator, describing the location of an unknown Dead Sea Scroll which, several days later, was found at the place indicated. This would constitute evidence for survival: the subject could not have learned about it by clairvoyance, telepathy, or precognition.

### THE SURVIVAL HYPOTHESIS: AN UNSUPPORTED SPECULATION

George Zorab

The answer of Mr. Zorab, the Dutch parapsychologist, to the question asked by the symposium is that there should be no "next" in survival research. He bases his recommendation on two observations. First of all, he notes that there has not yet been evidence to support it. In the course of history, attitudes toward survival have been dictated by the prevailing cultural beliefs, not by facts. Before the 18th century, paranormal phenomena were attributed to demons and other supernatural entities. When mesmerism became fashionable, these beliefs were supplanted by the idea that peoples' "animal magnetism" caused the phenomena. This in turn was superseded by spiritism which came into vogue in the latter half of the 19th century. Phenomena which formerly were thought to be caused by demons or, in the age of mesmerism, by animal spirits, now were ascribed to the agency of discarnate entities.

Psychical research, Zorab complains, has not shed any light on the problem. For instance, the cross correspondences (see THETA 7, page 3) can be explained equally well by the demonic as by the survival hypothesis. Furthermore, Zorab feels that the survival hypothesis is rendered improbable by the findings of the biological sciences since these have established a physical basis for mind and its various manifestations. "Just as our somatic inherited qualities are hardly liable to survive bodily death, just as little chance, so it seems to me, has the mind to exist beyond the grave."

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

W. G. Roll

The present symposium was intended to serve the following three purposes: (1) to obtain suggestions for formulating the survival hypothesis in ways that are logically sound and do not contradict established facts; (2) to obtain designs for tests that could give evidence for or against the survival hypothesis; and (3) to provide an impetus to get on with the task of collecting such evidence. (1) The philosophical papers have shown that from the logical and epistemological point of view there is no cause to worry about the survival hypothesis. In fact, any number of possible formulations of it can be sensibly expressed. (2) The papers which were concerned with specific research plans showed that there are ways to improve the methods of testing and focus them more clearly on the survival problem. Since Mr. Zorab's and Mr. Dean's papers are relevant to this issue and have not been previously discussed, a word may be in order here. Zorab argues that all attempts to decisively prove survival have failed and that, in any case, the theory is so much at variance with biological facts as to scarcely merit attention. I

agree with the first position. In fact, there would have been no point in the symposium if the survival theory were proven. The question is whether tests of it can be designed. It seems clear from the other symposium papers that this may be possible. Dean's proposal is a good example. If we know the range of a subject's ESP capacities, we can set up theta tests with targets which are beyond his own ESP but would be familiar to a deceased communicator. If the subject succeeds under those conditions, it would indicate the intervention of this communicator. Zorab's second objection applies also to other psi phenomena. Physiology and psychology have had no use for ESP; yet this capacity has been found both in animals and humans and apparently is related to their physiological and psychological states. A survivable component in the organism, even one that interacts with it during its lifetime, could easily have been overlooked. The question is, how to detect it if it is there.

(3) The symposium indicated that the survival hypothesis is philosophically possible and empirically testable. But it cannot be said to have succeeded unless it leads to new tests and investigations.

In practical terms, the next step in survival research should be the discovery and study of gifted mediums, out-of-the-body experiences, and RSPK cases. We invite readers of THETA to help in this effort, for instance, by sending newspaper clippings about cases or by making exploratory investigations of mediums. Guides for mediumistic studies and questionnaires for use in RSPK investigations will be sent on request. No special training is necessary. If a case or a medium seems promising, the Psychical Research Foundation should be contacted and an investigation by an experienced research worker will be attempted.

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