

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

---

## MY VIEWS ON SURVIVAL

W. H. C. TENHAEFF

NOTE: The Project Director of the Psychical Research Foundation, W. G. Roll, is presently in Europe to attend the convention of the Parapsychological Association, to explore for theta subjects, and to consult with European parapsychologists. Among the centers he has visited so far is the Parapsychology Institute of the State University of Utrecht, Holland. This is headed by Dr. W. H. C. Tenhaeff, who occupies the only existing professorship in parapsychology. Dr. Tenhaeff expresses his views on the survival hypothesis for THETA readers in the following pages.

It was during the winter of 1911/1912, when I was still a secondary school pupil in my native town of Rotterdam, that I came across a book whose contents were to be of decisive significance to my life. It was an anthology from the writings of Elise van Calcar, a woman who has played a very important part in the spiritualistic movement in the Netherlands. Furthermore, she was a well-known advocate of female suffrage and she has also done much for the advancement of teaching according to the Fröbel method. The book I came across was titled *Death is Life* and dealt with the problem of survival after death and the evidence, based on experience and "scientific research," which was adduced from the side of the spiritualists in favor of the belief in a personal survival.

During the following years, I spent nearly all the money I had available for buying books or building a small library of books that had any connection with the subject of spiritualism. Among these books was Myers' standard work *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, which made a deep impression on me, and contributed much to my decision, after some

years, to study psychology at the University of Utrecht, with the intention of specializing in the field of "psychical research" after the completion of my studies in psychology.

It needs no argument that the reading of books on subjects of "spiritualistic" nature did not satisfy me. I also tried to get in touch with the leaders of the spiritualistic movement in the Netherlands, and it was not long before I was taking part in sittings of various kinds.

When, after so long a time, I look back on these first few years, I cannot but recognize that they have been of great use to my career. Not

only did they bring me into contact with people of unmistakable paragnostic [ESP] gifts, which convinced me more and more of the necessity of making these "powers" the object of scientific (psychological) research, but also with well-meaning fanatics who were deceiving themselves. More than once I encountered cunning impostors, too, who speculated on the credulity of people mourning the loss of beloved relations.

Though at first (partly owing to a desire for satisfaction of mind) I was rather inclined to over-estimate the signifi-



cance of the spiritualistic hypothesis for parapsychological research, it should be observed that I soon began to doubt the general validity of the spiritualistic hypothesis.

Thus, I remember a sitting with a then rather prominent female psychometrist, who was, and rightly so, generally considered to be in complete good faith and entirely reliable as a person. One day a superior officer of the colonial army (whom she did not know at all) was introduced to her in my presence and she began to tell him that behind him she "saw" the image of an aged lady, of whom she was able to give a detailed description. "This lady," she said, "who was closely related to you, is wearing metal glasses. Now my attention is drawn to the bridge of these glasses. I see a hand winding wool around it." Not without emotion, the person addressed informed those present that the description given by the psychometrist applied entirely to his grandmother. The grandmother, to whom he had been very much attached, had died years before. She had, in fact, worn metal glasses, and as a child, he had often wound wool around the bridge of the glasses. The people present did not doubt that this was a remarkable evidence of identity and, personally, I did not doubt either, at that moment, that we had witnessed a phenomenon that could only be considered as proof of "interference" of the spirit-world with that of our own. Some years later, when I had had some more experience with psychometrists, I understood that I had strongly over estimated the value of this case as evidence of identity. Experience had then taught me that psychometrists are also able to receive similar images about living persons, so that the most obvious explanation of the case mentioned is to be found in an unconscious and unintended telepathic affecting of the subject by her visitor. The medium had "received hallucinations" about an affectively loaded memory of the visitor. As a parapsychological phenomenon, the case deserved our attention; as proof of the spiritualistic hypothesis, it proved to be worthless.

It is by no means my intention to give a survey of the development which my views have undergone in the course of years. It must suffice to say that, as my experiences with psychometrists became more numerous, my doubts as to the truth of the

explanations given by the spiritualists became graver. It was possible for me to explain animistically (to use a term by Aksakow) numerous proofs of identity which were considered "incontestable" in the eyes of the spiritualists. Indeed, it appeared that in a great number of cases they could be regarded as contributions to our knowledge of telepathy and related phenomena (and that as such they were of value), but as proof of the correctness of the spiritualistic hypothesis, they failed completely.

All this does not alter the fact that I certainly do not wish to deny that in the course of years I have come across cases regarded as evidence of identity which made me wonder if we were not violating the truth when continually and completely disregarding the spiritualistic hypothesis. Though, personally, I have no experience in the field of so-called cross-correspondences, and I have acquired my knowledge of this subject by a thorough study of the reports written on the subject by qualified researchers, I feel nevertheless impelled to own that a number of cases have made a deep impression on me. They have greatly contributed to leading me to believe firmly that we must count on the possibility of being confronted sooner or later with proofs of identity which will not only put into the shade all that is known up till now, but also be an important factor in lessening our doubts as to the adequacy of the evidence of identity as such.

In 1936 the first edition appeared of my book *Het Spiritisme*, the third edition of which is now being prepared. Though in this book I have proved the inadequacy of the average evidence of identity as *proof* of the truth of the spiritualistic conviction on parapsychological grounds, it does not alter the fact that I have never ranged myself with those who regard the spiritualistic hypothesis as a completely unacceptable parapsychological (working) hypothesis. In the course of years, I have repeatedly come into contact with persons who told me about so-called "out-of-the-body" experiences. A number of these cases did not have the same conclusive force on me as they apparently had on the various informants, but yet I should acknowledge that among these cases there are some that gave me food for thought, and the more so if we compare these cases

with those that have been collected by other researchers. Moreover, we should not consider these communications separately, but in connection with the results of investigations that have been done with some PK mediums. It needs no argument that I am aware of the fact that, in contrast with the ESP phenomena, whose existence has indeed been proved in such a way that doubt of it testifies to ignorance, there is rather a difference of opinion in the case of the existence of psychokinetic phenomena. It is my belief that anyone who has studied the investigations with psychokinetic mediums like Eusapia Palladino, Rudi Schneider, and others, with an open mind, cannot but find it difficult to rid himself of the conviction that at least part of their telekinetic phenomena bear the stamp of authenticity. We are strengthened in this conviction by the investigations of Rhine *et al.* in the field of psychokinesis. Though the tests in which certain persons (chosen at random) try to influence the free fall of dice leave room for various questions, it is an unquestionable fact that their results contribute to a strengthening of our willingness to accept in principle the occurrence of psychokinetic phenomena. In our endeavors to find an acceptable explanation for the occurrence of psychokinetic phenomena, our thoughts go to hylic

### SYMPOSIUM ON "WHAT NEXT IN SURVIVAL RESEARCH?" (III)

This is the third installment of abstracts of papers submitted for the symposium.

#### BODY-MIND THEORY AS A FACTOR GUIDING SURVIVAL RESEARCH

GARDNER MURPHY

Dr. Murphy, Director of Research at the Menninger Foundation, Topeka, Kansas, considers that the most convincing theta evidence are mediumistic communications that have the following features: (1) clear retention of memories; (2) continuity of aim or purpose; and (3) "personality style," which is a "type of organization or mode of interpreting the world and living it out which is highly personal and idiosyncratic." Since the collection of this kind of evidence depends on gifted mediums, the discovery of such mediums, in Dr. Murphy's opinion, should be the immediate task in the field.

pluralism, a subject treated in such an excellent way by Professor Dr. J. J. Poortman of Leyden University in his book *Ochêma*.

In this work, Poortman points out that, as against the notion that there is only one type of matter (a notion widely propagated in the 19th century) we find even in ancient civilizations a "belief" in plural materiality (hylic pluralism), according to which there are subtler types of matter than the "crude" matter that we know and have to do with every day. Closely connected with the theory of hylic pluralism is the conception that the soul does not have one vehicle (*ochêma*), but several. These bodies of subtler matter, according to this theory are the vehicles of the soul after having shed its physical body, which would be the case at death. In my opinion it is of great importance that parapsychological research should direct its attention not only to the investigation of so-called "out-of-the-body" experiences, but also to the psychokinetic phenomena related to them. Once we should have succeeded in proving that there is not only a plural materiality, but a plural corporeality, we should have taken an important step forward on the road which can lead us in a scientifically justified manner to the belief in a personal survival after death.

Parallel with this, he says, is a need for fresh theorizing. Due to the increasing "solidity and convincingness of the biological approach to human nature," it has become more difficult to conceive of detaching the personality from the living system as a whole and projecting it beyond the point of death. The second step for survival research is therefore "to make a soul or personality independently definable apart from the living system which it represents."

The ancient issue of the mind-body relationship was simplified by Spinoza's suggestion that they are different aspects of the same reality. Researches in the physical, biological, and social sciences present no serious conflicts with this body-mind "double-aspect theory," Murphy says. That is, while the physical processes of the body go on, there are also mental activities. He takes the position that "all body-mind

dualisms ultimately result in double-aspect theories, and that all double-aspect theories finally give the explanatory advantage to the subjective or personal experience. The . . . brain and the rest of the physical machinery of the body . . . are not ultimate, whereas the experience which we know in ourselves is ultimate."

Modern science defines the relation of the human organism to environment as a function of time-space, matter-energy interaction. This does not require us to refer to the physiological substrate of mental processes as their "cause," nor to say that mental events are the "cause" of the physiological substrate.

In studying the relation between organism and environment, science has discovered that contact is established by what it refers to as sensory communication. When stimulation exceeds a definable threshold, a new experience erupts into awareness, giving rise to physiological and mental reactions whose reciprocal effects on each other can then be studied. There is also, however, the eruption of impressions regarding distant events, as in clairvoyance and telepathy, where contact is made in the absence of an evident transfer of energy over space, and sometimes producing temporally displaced events, as in precognition.

While paranormal phenomena appear to be independent of physical systems, they follow psychological patterns: "the need and habit system of the living individual play a prominent part in the extrasensory functions." Among such needs is the one to keep contact with loved persons after their death. Ostensible theta communication and belief in survival are likely to provide an outlet for this need. Consistent with the view that some alleged theta evidence is psychological artifact, Murphy notes that the nature of alleged surviving entities varies with people's cultural pre-conceptions.

Perhaps, Murphy says, there is a substrate in the organism which, like the sound waves of music, may produce an organized structure elsewhere in time and space. "If the personality is a form or reality embodying a certain organization, it can perfectly well get along for a time without a physical substrate that is visible to us and may at a later time assume another one which is physical and familiar to us though perhaps taking surprising form."

But does it persist after death? This question cannot be decided till we know whether ostensible theta evidence is only the reflection of personal or cultural expectations or whether at least some of it is produced by personalities that have survived.

## PERSONNEL

Mrs. Elizabeth G. Norton was appointed Managing Editor of Theta on May 1, 1964. Mrs. Norton, who has assisted with the publication for several months, is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College. She also attended the University de Paris and the graduate school of New York University and has held editorial positions in New York City and Los Angeles.

Funds are needed to expand the search for theta subjects, particularly in countries where they are more accessible to research than they are in the United States. Contributions for this work should be sent to the President, Dr. J. G. Pratt, Box 6116, College Station, Durham, N. C., or to the Vice-President, Professor H. H. Price, Jack Straw's Lane, Oxford, England. Gifts to the Foundation are tax deductible.

---

Application for Second Class entry at Durham, N. C., is pending.

THETA is issued quarterly in Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.

The subscription of \$2 or £0-15-0 for two years (8 issues) should be sent to

THETA, College Station, Durham, N. C. 27708, U.S.A.

Editor: W. G. Roll — Managing Editor: Elizabeth G. Norton — © THETA 1964