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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

SYMPOSIUM ON "WHAT NEXT IN SURVIVAL RESEARCH?" (I)

In the face of the need for renewed research efforts on the question of survival after death, the Psychical Research Foundation has arranged a symposium in which persons interested in this question have been asked to state what factual or theoretical work, in their opinion, would contribute to a solution to the theta problem. The contributors have not been limited to what they consider conclusive evidence, but were encouraged to take account of their own special interests or of actual research opportunities.

The abstracts of the symposium papers, presented in this and subsequent issues of THETA, have been prepared by the editors. A selection of the papers will later be printed in full in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*.

Readers are invited to submit contributions on the symposium topic, or comments on the printed papers, for possible publication in THETA.

AN EXPERIMENTALIST'S APPROACH

GERTRUDE SCHMEIDLER

Dr. Schmeidler, of the Department of Psychology at the College of the City of New York, begins with the question, "Will finding the ideal case, or performing the crucial experiment, prove that survival occurs? Or can a carefully conducted series of investigations prove that survival does not occur?" She concludes that survival cannot be proved by research, any more than research can establish that an external world exists, or for that matter, while we, ourselves are alive, that we will die.

"Research data can never prove; they can only provide the basis for a consensus." There are two ways to reach a consensus.

One is by hypothesis-testing. If a hypothesis leads to many predictions which are confirmed, the hypothesis is strongly supported. The other is by "construct validity," whereby several theories, each weakly supported, tie together in a pattern that is more persuasive than its single parts. Dr. Schmeidler believes that parapsychologists should combine these approaches by creating complex theories and testing them. "Research has been hampered because it has tried to test only some such global theory as 'There is survival after death,' a statement too vague to point clearly at testable predictions."

Instead, the theta investigator should construct as detailed a theory as possible on the basis of earlier observations, test each part, and revise and enlarge it as necessary. "The theory in a late revision will either have failed so often that no reasonable person will espouse it, or else will have made such varied, specific, successful predictions, which other theories do not make, that there will be a consensus of at least tentative acceptance."

As an example of such a theory she postulates that "(1) messages from the dead can be communicated through a medium; (2) a medium who can receive messages from the dead in one society can also receive them in another even though the language is different; (3) the major psychological needs of a person when alive will also be the needs of this person when recently dead; (4) the content of messages from the dead will refer to needs which have goals that can be attained through mediumistic messages."

From these assumptions she outlines a project with specific predictions: Psychol-

ogists should examine the needs of dying or aged persons before death. After death a medium should obtain messages from them. The psychologists should then compare the need patterns established earlier with the contents of the mediumistic messages, the prediction being that there will be more than a chance relationship. Dr. Schmeidler further suggests that the researcher should carefully distinguish between psychological needs that could not be satisfied by mediumistic communication (such as isolation, withdrawal, and curiosity) and those that could (recognition, affiliation, hostility). The prediction is that the first category would be matched with only chance success, but that the second would correlate significantly with the messages. Finally, Dr. Schmeidler proposes taking a medium to a culture which has different psychological needs than his own and comparing the messages he obtains there with those he obtained in his own culture. The prediction is that they would not match.

If the predictions are not verified, an examination of the results may lead to a better hypothesis for testing. Dr. Schmeidler notes that even if all the predictions are confirmed, they will not yield information about the two major counterhypotheses to survival: clairvoyance and telepathy from the living. She believes that research designed to test such counterhypotheses should have precedence, but this should not necessarily deter investigators from initiating other projects. For instance, tests of a theory such as the one proposed by her might reveal unanticipated patterns in the messages which would permit a fuller evaluation of the counterhypotheses to the theta explanation. "The by-products of a theory and its testing are often more important than the theory was; but until a theory is constructed and tested, its by-products may not be found."

INSTRUMENTATION FOR RSPK INVESTIGATIONS

CHARLES T. TART

Dr. Tart, of the Laboratory of Human Development, Stanford University, California, describes a wide range of instruments for use in the study of RSPK (re-

current spontaneous psychokinesis) phenomena. While some such phenomena have been suggestive of living agency PK, usually produced by a member of the household, others appeared to involve a theta agency. The latter type are popularly known as "haunting" cases, while the former are often referred to as "poltergeist" phenomena.

This paper sets out to demonstrate, first, how instrumental investigations may help to determine whether the occurrences are fraudulent or due to physical causes as, for example, earth tremors, and secondly, if they are parapsychical, to throw light on their *modus operandi*. When the investigator reaches the second stage, he will particularly want to know in which respects, if any, the phenomena suggestive of a theta agency differ from those where a living agent is indicated. If the physical characteristics of apparent theta-PK, as demonstrated by instrumental studies, are different, this might indicate a different agency as well. On the other hand, if "haunting" cases are similar in all respects to living agency RSPK, except with regard to apparent agency, it is easier to suppose that here, too, this is a living person.

Tart suggests that since RSPK phenomena are often short-lived or widely separated in time, the investigator must attempt to extract as much information as possible from only a few events. Adequate investment in advanced instrumentation might help to do this.

As part of the equipment, Tart advises photo-cells which can measure the increase or decrease of light, whether visible, infrared, or ultraviolet. Thus one could judge whether an apparition actually emitted light or was hallucinatory. Occasionally the phenomena are associated with apparent temperature changes, such as cold chills. Thermocouples and thermistors would indicate whether there are actual temperature changes or whether it is a matter of subjective reactions on the parts of persons witnessing the phenomena.

For the detection and analysis of sound waves, Tart proposes microphones operating a device known as a voice key which can operate both above and below the

audible range. Tart cites as an example the case of the dog who reacts strangely in a purportedly haunted house. Perhaps the dog hears supersonic sounds connected with the psychical occurrences. Further use of microphones would also indicate if alleged screams, knocks, and other noises are physical or hallucinatory.

Perhaps the most important devices are those which can register the movements of persons and objects. These are useful both in helping to detect fraud and in telling something about the nature of genuine phenomena. For instance, photo-cell beams could detect moving persons or objects, and so could ultrasonic sound beams and capacitance relays. The latter allow the frequency of unstable oscillators to be affected by changes in the electrical capacitance of their surroundings. Thus, a material body such as a person or an object moving into the room would activate the device. Tart notes that it would be interesting to know what effects, if any, an apparition seen in the room would have on such relays.

In cases where certain objects are frequently moved, the author proposes the use of simple switches to be placed beneath the objects. The switch would be designed to close as soon as the object is lifted. Switches could also be placed on doors to indicate when they were opened, and behind and under furniture. Thus, even if the experimenter were in another room away from the area where it was later found something had moved, by knowing exactly *when* it was moved, he might know if anyone was in the area at the time who could have interfered fraudulently.

Tart believes that specially trained animals could be utilized to detect phenomena. With modern conditioning techniques, animals can be trained to operate a key at a steady rate. The responses of these animals in an allegedly haunted home could be correlated with different types of paranormal phenomena.

Naturally, photography could play a part in such studies. For instance, a flash camera with a wide-angle lens, placed in the corner of a room, could photograph most of it when activated by a detector

device. Various types of special films and lenses allow a camera to be sensitive to the infrared and ultraviolet portions of the spectrum. Two different cameras, triggered simultaneously, could capture effects in either the visible or invisible portions of the spectrum.

With regard to sounds, a tape recorder is recommended in all cases. A polygraph could provide a permanent record of the activation of the various detector devices. Each detector should also operate a buzzer or other receiver carried by the experimenter so he can be instantly alerted when something happens.

All the basic instrumentation, Tart believes, could be portable and fitted into two or three suitcases. The wires between detectors and recording equipment could be small and unobtrusive, and if each detector emits a radio signal, almost all connecting wires would be eliminated. Nevertheless, Tart notes that the gadgets may disturb some subjects, and that the successful introduction of instrumentation will largely depend upon the psychological tact of the experimenter.

ASTRAL PROJECTION TESTS

RAYNOR C. JOHNSON

The issue of survival has been "settled" by evidence provided through mediumship, in the opinion of Dr. Johnson, Master of Queens College, University of Melbourne, Australia. "It may not be strictly 'proven,' but most of the things we live by are in this category." As a research project that may be as informative in its own way as mediumistic studies were in the past, Dr. Johnson suggests tests pertaining to "astral projection" (also known as "ESP projection" or "travelling clairvoyance"), in which a person's consciousness and perceptual abilities leave his body.

Among the tests proposed are experiments bearing upon the limitations of ESP, such as attempts to produce cross-correspondences by a projected subject, and to crack Dr. Thouless's cipher test of survival. The advantage of ESP projection over other types of theta research is that the projected person can easily return to discuss his experiences with investigators, whereas the dead person cannot.

A GROUP SURVIVAL TEST

CARL E. HIRSCH

Mr. Carl Hirsch of Norristown, Pennsylvania, proposes an experiment in which a group of persons would carefully prepare themselves for death in order to be more adept at mediumistic communication afterwards. As a training manual Hirsch recommends *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Oxford University Press, 1957). Though the descriptions of an after-life and the instructions given to dying persons regarding how best to make the transition to it are colored by Tibetan lore, Hirsch thinks they may have some basis in fact.

He proposes that several persons take part in the project so that the investigator can "compare the various individual reports so as to finally arrive at some uniform conception of the after-death state." The first step, Hirsch proposes, is to study and commit to memory those parts of the volume which are related to the different after-death stages. This should be supplemented by the "Doctrine of the After-Death State" from *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (Oxford University Press, 1958).

The first after-death state, of which each phase is known as a Bardo, is the Chikhai Bardo, the Bardo of the moments of death. This phase "offers the greatest opportunity . . . for achieving . . . the unbroken continuity of consciousness required for some degree of rational, emotional and volitional self-control beyond the actual moment of death." In relation to this Hirsch says "the participants might instruct those around them that the death process be allowed to take its natural course, and that emotional outbursts from those present be eliminated, since this could well precipitate the dying person into an attitude of attachment."

The first phase lasts three to four days. After this the subject enters the Chönyid Bardo when he is likely to "simply confront the secondary reflexes or projections of his own inmost thoughts, emotions and

volitions, as well as the karmic and moral propensities of his past bodily life." It is the third phase, or Sidpa Bardo, which Hirsch regards as the significant one for theta research, since the deceased supposedly can communicate with the living world during the month or so this phase lasts. Hirsch suggests that an attempt to communicate a message to a medium, such as the one evolved by R. H. Thouless (see THETA 2), should be made during this stage.

PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

At the annual election of officers, W. G. Roll, Project Director of the Psychical Research Foundation, Inc., was made President for 1964. The Parapsychological Association is the international, professional organization in the field of psychical research.

Roll will serve also as a member of Council for 1964-65 with two other newly elected Council members, Dr. Gertrude Schmeidler of the College of the City of New York, and Dr. J. G. Pratt of the School of Medicine, University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Dr. Pratt is President of the Psychical Research Foundation and a member of its Board of Directors.

The Association's present Council, elected for the 1964-65 term, includes another Foundation Board member, Dr. Ian Stevenson, Chairman and Professor of the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at the University of Virginia, Dr. K. R. Rao and Mrs. D. H. Pope, both of the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University, and Dr. C. B. Nash, Director of the Parapsychology Laboratory of St. Joseph's College, Philadelphia. Dr. Nash will serve as Vice-President for 1964, Dr. Schmeidler as Secretary, and Dr. Pratt as Treasurer.

The seventh annual convention of the Association will be held at Christ Church College, Oxford University, England, September 4-6.

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

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