

SIXTH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

The 1963 convention of the P.A. was held at the Barbizon-Plaza Hotel, New York City, September 5-7. Some of the papers and a panel presentation touched directly or indirectly on theta research. In the introductory research briefs section W. G. Roll, Project Director of the Psychical Research Foundation (P.R.F.), described tests by him and Dr. C. T. Tart in which a "medium" matched the two halves of photographs in separate opaque cardboard folders, supposedly on the basis of psychical emanations. On the following day Dr. J. G. Pratt, P.R.F. President, presented his and Dr. Milan Ryzl's outstanding ESP experiments. It was found that the subject responded only to certain cards: since all were physically similar, the difference may have been due to different psychical properties associated with the cards. These and the Roll-Tart tests carry the question whether material objects have psychical constituents, first raised by the old mediumistic explorations with "psychometric" objects, into the arena of modern experimentation.

On the same day, in a paper on memory and ESP, Roll found that ESP responses are expressed in terms of the memory traces of the percipient and are not actual reproductions of the target. If living-agency telepathy is restricted in this way, a search should be made for theta material in which the memory of the presumed theta agent is expressed, rather than the percipient's, as by knowledge of languages or skills not known to the latter.

The final part of the convention program was a panel presentation of two P.R.F. field investigations. In addition to

Roll, panelists were Dr. David L. Blumenthal, clinical psychologist in Indianapolis, and Dr. John Altrocchi, Department of Psychiatry, Duke University. In the absence of Dr. Altrocchi, his paper was read by*Dr. Blumenthal.

Investigation of Indianapolis Disturbances by W. G. Roll. This study was made in March, 1962 in the home of Mrs. Bloom, her daughter, Louisa (13), and her mother, Mrs. Gerb (all names are assumed). The events consisted mostly of unexplained movements of household items. An impersonal physical cause seemed ruled out since the occurrences were usually in proximity to Mrs. Bloom and Mrs. Gerb. An explanation in terms of fraud, conscious or unconscious, was more plausible but difficult to reconcile with statements made to Roll by two visitors to the house: in the presence of one a wall lamp fell down shortly after he had checked it (following a previous fall), and a milk bottle moved across the kitchen floor while Mrs. Bloom was in view of the other and no one else was at home. Using a floor map, Roll described some of the incidents that took place while he was in the house, among them, the fall of a bath brush to the hallway stairs while he was watching Mrs. Bloom and no one else was near. Though Roll could not give ordinary explanations for these and other events, he said that definite conclusions cannot be drawn from uncontrolled spontaneous occurrences. PK can be accepted only as a working hypothesis, and it is on this basis that the events were analyzed for clues relating to agency and

other causal factors. Using charts to indicate the directions of movements and their places of origin, Roll showed that Mrs. Bloom and her mother were both closely connected with the events, the former often near their points of origin, with Mrs. Gerb usually the recipient or victim of the disturbances. Eventually, they led to her departure from the home, at which time the disturbances ceased.

Psychological Studies of Mrs. Bloom by David L. Blumenthal. Interviews were made with Mrs. Bloom, her daughter, Louisa, the grandmother, personal friends of the family, and professional acquaintances. The purpose of this work was to assess the personalities of the three individuals involved, to evaluate the psychological dynamics of the intrafamily relationships, and to identify outstanding psycho-pathological characteristics, if any, which might bear on the reported phenomena. It was felt that Mrs. Bloom, a person accustomed to living in crises, dramatizing her vicissitudes, and drawing others into the orbit of her influence, was the storm center of the family. At the time the phenomena began Mrs. Bloom was in conflict with the grandmother and envisioned the latter's return to Europe, or at least her move from the home, as a possible solution to some of the psychosocial problems which she was currently confronting. Most of the occurrences appeared to take the grandmother as their target, as if these phenomena served as an extension of Mrs. Bloom's personality. Mrs. Bloom, in spite of her relative impulsiveness, was inhibited in terms of expressing rebellion toward her mother. The phenomena might have served this purpose. The Rorschach and the Thematic Apperception Test were administered by Dr. T. H. Barrett. Mrs. Bloom's responses to these tests show that she regards her mother as possessive, controlling, and dominating, and directs considerable hostility toward her. She also appears to have strongly hostile, destructive impulses, and to be concerned about them. However, she does not or cannot express them directly. There is some indication of conversion hysteria and of considerable anxiety and feelings of inadequacy.

Investigation of Jackson Disturbances and a Comparative Analysis for Agency by W. G. Roll. At the request of the family, visits were made to the Michigan home of the Grants and their four children (ages 11-22) in December, 1961 and January, 1962. The disturbances ranged from movements of household objects to the opening of doors in empty rooms and the turning down of bedcovers, as if prepared for sleeping. Since such events cannot be ascribed to impersonal physical forces, the choice again seemed to lie between fraud and PK. Two visitors were interviewed who said they had expected to uncover pranks, but each found the covers turned down shortly after checking them, and both claimed they were certain no one had entered the room. Once, after Roll had taken up position by the entrance to the bedroom area to watch that no one interfered with the doors or beds, the door most often involved opened. Roll was the last to enter that doorway and had firmly closed the door. An examination was made for loose boards and hidden release mechanisms, but none were found. While the events cannot be cited as evidence, they indicated a parapsychical explanation sufficiently to open the further question of agency. Charts were used to show the relations of the events to each member of the family, including spatial proximity to the disturbances, directions of movements in relation to the positions of the persons, and the possible psychological significance of the events. Where these analyses pointed clearly to one person in the Indianapolis study, no relations were found to any member of the Grant family. In addition to the apparent absence of an agent, this case differed from the Indianapolis case in other respects, such as in reports of unexplained shadows and footsteps, and the strange behavior of the dog (there was also a dog in the Indianapolis house, but nothing unusual was observed about it). In the light of apparent similarities between reported behavior patterns of previous occupants of the house and the disturbances, the possibility was considered that a theta-PK source was operating independently of the present family.

Analysis of MMPI Profiles of Indianapolis and Jackson Families by John Altrocchi. The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory profiles of Louisa Bloom, Mrs. Bloom, and Mrs. Gerb suggested three very different females who could easily be in severe conflict. Louisa's profile showed somewhat more impulsiveness and rebelliousness than is common in girls of her age. Mrs. Bloom's profile was unusual and hard to interpret because it had many very low scores. It is the healthiest of the three profiles, but suggests a highly conventional and socialized woman who might have trouble being directly forceful. Mrs. Gerb's profile clearly indicates more psychological disturbances in the form of depression than the other, but much more striking is the extreme degree to which the profile reveals a need to present a good front. Some of this may be culturally determined. She presents herself as excessively virtuous and super Christian, and essentially seems to want to say that she has no base or basic impulses. A family situation with these three very different females living together would be likely to be extremely tense. The tension would probably decrease significantly if one of them were to disappear from the picture.

All members of the Grant family took the MMPI. Mrs. Grant's profile is the healthiest and characteristic of an individual who has little anxiety, considerable self-confidence, and is effective in interpersonal living. Altrocchi's over-all impression of the family is that they display slightly more than the average degree of life difficulties, but this may partly be due to the household disturbances. He did not characterize the family as displaying a high degree of suggestibility, nor is there evidence of lack of reality contact. One can imagine some interpersonal problems and perhaps more than the average degree of stress, but there is much less evidence of tension than in the Bloom family. In that situation one had the feeling that someone had to go or something had to give, whereas this is not the case in the Grant family.

UNIVERSITY BOOKS

University Books of New Hyde Park, New York, is to be commended for resuscitating the classical works of psychical research. Until now this literature was largely out of print or inaccessible in the back volumes of professional periodicals. They have also published material which, although not directly concerned with psi phenomena, is instructive in showing how cultural beliefs may affect their interpretation and expression. This point is central to an objective appraisal of theta material.

H. A. Junod, in his second volume of *The Life of a South African Tribe* (2 vols. 1234 pp. \$20), discusses the religious beliefs and magical practices of the Thongas. Here is a world where psychical causation is in evidence everywhere. The dead are the gods of the tribe and inhabit sacred parts of the forest. They visit and advise the living in dreams and influence the fall of divinatory bones which the natives cast before undertaking important actions. Similar practices are known in Europe; for instance, the Gypsies predict future events on the basis of the movements of seeds on a "witching drum," as C. G. Leland relates in *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune Telling* (304 pp. \$10). Here are the antecedents of the dice and card tests of parapsychologists. Other beliefs are likely to remain superstitions, as the surprisingly widespread one discussed in *The Vampire in Europe* (349 pp. \$7.50) by Montague Summers. Fortunately, in the United States, this kind of survival is restricted to the movie and T.V. screen—or no blood bank would be safe.

Should the reader feel anemic after these pages, he will be restored by a few selections from Frank Podmore's work on mental healing, *From Mesmer to Christian Science* (327 pp. \$10). It is included here because of the part played by the beliefs and practices of Mesmerism and "animal magnetism" in the early history of spiritualism and parapsychology. Some hypnotized patients appeared to possess ESP powers and others a key to the spirit world: since the trance state was consid-

ered a certificate of veracity, the experiences of the subjects were usually taken at face value.

As the ancestor of chemistry is alchemy, the origins of parapsychology are interwoven with fads and folklore. Unlike chemistry, which matured from myth by the development of theories which made prediction and control possible, parapsychology has not yet succeeded in substituting scientific hypotheses for the earlier beliefs. An added difficulty is that the beliefs which are current in a given culture support and perpetuate themselves by influencing the forms that psychical (and psychological) experiences take. In *Mediums of the 19th Century* (2 vols. 719 pp. \$20) Frank Podmore traces the pedigree of spiritualism along these lines. The main emphasis is on "physical mediumship" where fraud, illusion, and hallucination are always found, rather than anything suggestive of PK. The final chapter deals with Mrs. Piper, on whose "communications" with the dead the attention of psychical research was focussed at the turn of the century. Here, finally, Podmore found evidence of psi, not theta communication, but telepathy dramatized by the beliefs of the subject as messages from the dead. Podmore's own prejudices, however, are as transparent as his subjects'. The extent to which he stretches normal explanations to cover the phenomena, e.g. associated with D. D. Home, make them as paranormal as psychokinesis. A more detached attitude is presented in Everard Fielding's *Sittings with Eusapio Palladino and Other Studies* (344 pp. \$10). Fielding was a capable observer, as several physical mediums learned to their regret. Palladino, too, was often caught in fraud, but she also seemed to produce phenomena which could not be explained so simply. There is a detailed record of experiments in which movements of objects were reported while the subject was under observation by the experimenters.

Whatever else can be said about Palladino, she certainly qualifies as one of E. J. Dingwall's *Very Peculiar People* (223 pp. \$6). The company includes Emanuel Swedenborg whose supposed ESP insights receive qualified endorsement while his

theology, based on alleged excursions into the other world, is rated an "hallucinatory system." Among the three other profiles Fielding describes, the Dominican friar, Johann Jetzer, and St. Mary Magdalene show traces of parapsychological abilities, but these are dwarfed by the gross pathological features which 16th-century monastic life undoubtedly accentuated. Theatrical displays of pathology are also the main theme of *Some Human Oddities* (198 pp. \$6), by the same author. However, there are two cases of possible parapsychical interest: "St. Joseph of Cupertino: The Friar Who Flew" and D. D. Home who also flew and did much else. To suppose that these people levitated, etc. is very difficult, but to suppose that the many allegedly skeptical witnesses were lying or hallucinated is also no mean feat for the imagination. But credibility is a function of repeatability and before we can take such phenomena seriously we must have more of them. The situation regarding ESP events is very different: they are plentiful and rejection of them can be excused only on grounds of ignorance or prejudice.

The kinds of mainly ESP occurrences which gave rise to experimental psychical research and to which we must still return for new insights are well represented in Walter Franklin Prince's collection, *Noted Witnesses for Psychical Occurrences* (346 pp. \$10). Here we have telepathic dreams, ESP hallucinations, precognitions, and a sprinkling of haunts and poltergeists, reported by men and women who were well-known in their day. If the implications of these data are to be found, they have to be analyzed and interpreted, and for this we must go to the English Society for Psychical Research. The papers on spontaneous ESP, brought together in *Phantasms of the Living* (1041 pp. \$15) by Mrs. E. M. Sidgwick (and E. Gurney, F. W. H. Myers, and Frank Podmore) are undoubtedly, as Gardner Murphy says in the foreword, the crowning achievement of the "finest mind so far in the history of psychical research." In contrast to this intellectually crisp and economic writer, we have Aniela Jaffé who discusses Swiss *Apparitions and Precognition* (214 pp.

\$7.50) from the point of view of C. G. Jung's psychology. Aldous Huxley said of Jung in his foreword to the Myers' volume (see below) that he is like certain German scholars who "dive deeper and come up muddier than any others." This certainly applies to Dr. Jaffé.

Among the ESP abilities of living persons, the alleged capacity to project consciousness and perceptual abilities to a distant location probably has the greatest implication for the survival issue since this separation may be the precursor for one at death. The volume in which Oliver Fox describes his experiences and the associated psychological states, *Astral Projection, A Record of Out-of-the-Body Experiences* (160 pp. \$5) is unpretentious and interesting. However, *From India to the Planet Mars*, by Th. Flournoy, Professor of Psychology at the University of Geneva, never gets off the launching pad, in spite of its promising title. Flournoy finds little evidence of ESP and none of survival in this painstaking examination of material produced by his subject. But for readers who are interested in the tales that can be spun in the unconscious, the volume will be revealing.

Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death (416 pp. \$10) by F. W. H. Myers remains one of the most significant contributions to the literature of parapsychology. This is not because the central theory is ever likely to lead to testable hypotheses, but because it encompasses such a rich collection of phenomena, normal, abnormal, and paranormal. Regarding the theta problem, Myers thought that

mediumistic material, particularly Mrs. Piper's, together with the evidence from ESP hallucinations of the departed, prove survival of personality after death. This volume is an abridgement of the original.

Myers' approach to the data of parapsychology is continued and developed by G. N. M. Tyrrell whose two best books are brought together in *Science and Psychological Phenomena; Apparitions* (572 pp. \$7.50). In the latter he develops the theory that apparitions are psychological projections built over a telepathic stimulus—occasionally furnished by a discarnate mind. The first part of the volume begins with a good general review of psychical research, including a thorough examination of mediumistic communications, and concludes with Tyrrell's theory of trance mediumship. This, briefly, is that a sort of secondary personality with ESP faculties is built up in the subject—"in the poorer types of trance-mediumship there may be little or nothing more than this. Then one gets a masquerading caricature—probably a dressed-up sub-personality of a hypnotic type. But in higher types of mediumship this communication-vehicle is made use of by an independent entity which is sometimes, though perhaps not always, an entity animated by the still-existing self-principle of a deceased person."

Clearly, not all these works are of equal importance to the student of theta. If the book budget allows only a few acquisitions, the first choice is unquestionably the Tyrrell volume, the second, Myers, and the third, either the *Phantasms* collection or the Fielding *Sittings*.

GLOSSARY

CLAIRVOYANCE: An ESP response to a physical event.

ESP (extrasensory perception): Response to an event by a subject without the use of known channels of information.

PK (psychokinesis): A physical effect produced by a subject without known intermediaries.

PRECOGNITION: Information obtained about a future event by other means than rational inference from present physical or mental events.

PSI PHENOMENA: ESP, PK, precognition, theta-ESP, and theta-PK phenomena.

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH (parapsychology): Research in which scientific methods are applied to the study of psi phenomena.

TELEPATHY: An ESP response to a mental event.

THETA: The hypothesis or reality of survival of personality, or some part of it, after bodily death.

THETA AGENT: A surviving personality, or part of one, responsible for theta-ESP or theta-PK effects.

THETA-ESP: An ESP response to a theta agent.

THETA-PK: A physical effect produced by a theta agent.

THETA SUBJECT: A person instrumental in obtaining theta-ESP or theta-PK effects (popularly known as a medium).

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