

A BULLETIN FOR RESEARCH ON THE PROBLEM OF SURVIVAL AFTER BODILY DEATH  
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## SYMPOSIUM ON "WHAT NEXT IN SURVIVAL RESEARCH?" (II)

In this number we continue the presentation of summaries, in abstract, of papers with theoretical and empirical proposals pertaining to theta research.

### WHAT NEXT IN SURVIVAL RESEARCH?

FREDERICK C. DOMMEYER

Professor Frederick C. Dommeyer, Chairman of the Philosophy Department at San José State College, California, seeks to clarify some of the main problems in theta research. Three questions are posed: (1) What is it that is supposed to survive the death of a human being? (2) What sort of evidence would convince us of the survival of this particular human element? (3) Can such evidence be obtained?

He first considers the possibility of proving reincarnate and/or discarnate survival of *innate*, as opposed to *acquired*, mental capacities. Dommeyer concludes that it is impossible to identify a surviving mind solely on the basis of innate abilities, because these would become obscured by capacities acquired in the after-death state.

In the balance of his paper he deals with the possibility of establishing a workable method for identifying innate and/or acquired characteristics in reincarnation cases. The most convincing evidence for reincarnation would be a case where a living person exhibited the characteristics a deceased person had acquired before death. This presupposes intimate knowledge of the deceased person's actions and reactions under specific conditions.

To explain how this could take place, Dommeyer proposes that the thoughts and characteristics of a person are "taped" and held "in space" while he is alive, and after his death, are transmitted to another living person in whom they are observable. Such a continuation of the acquired characteris-

tics of a deceased person would generally be interpreted as evidence for reincarnation. Dommeyer observes, however, that the recording process could be an impersonal one, and the transfer need not involve a surviving mind.

On the basis of this reasoning, he asserts that survival cannot be proved by showing even a complete similarity of surviving capacities. "What must be shown to prove survival is that it is *my* mind or *his* mind that has survived, and this cannot be done by appeal to the notion of 'similarity.'"

We need to discover some special identifying marks of the human mind that would be analogous, say, with the fingerprints of its body. An investigator could then establish that the mind (innate and/or acquired) of someone living had also been possessed by a previously deceased person.

### WHAT WOULD MAKE RESEARCH ON SURVIVAL TICK AGAIN

KARLIS OSIS

Dr. Osis, who is Director of Research at the American Society for Psychical Research, first discusses the practical problems of theta research, such as organization, manpower, long-term planning, and financing.

Osis estimates that out of forty or fifty researchers attending a convention of the Parapsychological Association, only three or four work on the theta problem. There is also a high degree of insecurity in the profession, resulting from a rapid turnover of personnel. An additional burden on survival research is imposed "by unreasonable

expectations of what can be accomplished. The idea that Survival is a field where, with little monetary investment, one can turn the world upside down, is simply a delusion. The persons who wish to foster Survival research should realize that they are working on something very complex, and that only efficient, long-range development will count. The flash-in-the-pan approach is here as wasteful as in any complex and difficult research area."

In appraising the evidence for survival, Osis thinks it is not the single arresting case, nor even a handful, which carries conviction, but the broad panorama of varying kinds of phenomena suggestive of survival. He further believes that a complex area such as this should be divided into smaller "chunks" which research can handle. We must also seek better research methods and should look to neighboring fields such as biology and psychology for methods which might be borrowed. "Methodological improvements (are) . . . not a waste of time, but a necessity of our age."

Osis suggests that cross-correspondence experiments using different linkage conditions, and the comparative study of death-bed visions, for instance, of dying Christians and Buddhists, may be especially promising areas for theta explorations.

In addition to research which focuses directly on the survival issue, Osis advocates studies dealing with the nature of ESP and the relation between ESP and distance in time and space. "I personally believe that research in this area might reveal an unknown structure in the universe, beyond the known four-dimensional continuum. We might discover a dimension which makes Survival thinkable."

### SOME LOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE QUESTION OF SURVIVAL

J. M. O. WHEATLEY

Dr. Wheatley, of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto, Canada, considers five positions on the theta problem: (1) survival is logically impossible; (2) survival is logically possible, but empirically impossible, or at least highly improbable; (3) survival is

both logically possible and empirically possible; (4) survival is logically possible and empirically probable; (5) survival is not only logically possible, but empirically assured. He believes that these viewpoints, with the possible exception of the fifth, could be held today by persons who are both rational and open-minded.

The main logical problem facing the theta hypothesis is that it appears not to be falsifiable. Wheatley points out that a theory that cannot be *disproven* by empirical evidence can also not be *proven* by it. The difficulty with the survival hypothesis is not that there are no conceivable facts that could count against it, but that if it is false, "in the very nature of the case, we cannot . . . know that it is false." To resolve the impasse and be able logically to defend the initiation of research, Wheatley suggests that we *presuppose* that survival occurs and treat the concept as a working assumption rather than a scientific hypothesis.

However, Wheatley does not equate this position with the common view that if there is survival, everybody survives. He notes that the results of ESP tests tend to be affected by the subject's attitude to ESP. Similarly in experiments with drugs, the kind of experience a subject has depends largely on his expectations. Is it too far-fetched, Wheatley asks, to suggest that "a person's expectations, attitudes, or beliefs may likewise play a major role in whether or not he will survive bodily death"? He proposes that a study be made of alleged communicators to ascertain whether any were strong "disbelievers."

Next, he considers the problem of personal identity. He notes that definitions of identity generally insist on physical continuity. Nevertheless, a person may not be associated with a body but have identity, or a non-physical or "etheric" constitution.

How can a completely disembodied person be identified? It would have to be shown that it had shared memories of experiences with a previously embodied personality. The existence of such a "bundle of mental events" could be indicated only on the basis of self-identification, that is, one's awareness of one's own unique existence.

Wheatley concludes that the supposition of physical continuity is inadequate and that of bodiless existence unintelligible, and that it is more logically inviting to assume the existence of an "astral" or non-physical body.

### OUT-OF-THE-BODY EXPLORATIONS

J. H. M. WHITEMAN

Dr. Whiteman, Associate Professor of Applied Mathematics at the University of Capetown, South Africa, suggests that together with the study of mediumistic communications, apparitions, etc., theta research should be supplemented by analyses of "out-of-the-body" experiences (ESP projection).

During such experiences it sometimes seems that the subject enters a non-physical world in which deceased personalities may be encountered. Whiteman advocates a careful assessment of the evidence collected by such subjects about "other-world geography," and about ostensible "non-physical personalities" encountered there, with special emphasis on those that can be identified as previous inhabitants of this world. Proof for the objective reality of such a non-physical world would depend on what Whiteman calls three "degrees of conviction." The first would be supplied by evidence of a non-physical world existing in its own right which the projected subject could visit. There would be a second degree of conviction if people were observed in this other world, and a third, if some of them could be identified as persons known to have "died."

As a numerical expression for evidence of identification, Whiteman proposes that a rating scale be applied to each case studied. He bases the scale on four criteria: (1) the personality observed by the projected subject exhibits many "interrelated details of appearance and behavior, personal idiosyncrasies, etc., which give the impression of a . . . 'person;'" (2) he appears to have three dimensions and is observable by all the senses; (3) the person awakens empathy in the projected subject as a result of being vivid and real, a "presence transcending mere appearances—an 'I Am' or 'Very Self;'" (4) he

manifests all normal powers of communication, intellect, and memory.

Points would be allotted under each heading, first for "personal reality" and second for "personal identity" of the alleged personality. Up to five points would be allocated under each of the four headings for personal reality, with a total of ten testifying to "complete" reality; and up to six under each heading, for personal identity, a total of ten giving "assured" identity.

Whiteman warns "that appearances are no sufficient guarantee of identity." Impersonations are probably easy in non-physical states. "Doubles" of living persons can appear convincingly, and it may even be possible to converse with them. This must be borne in mind when deciding on the exact ratings for either the reality or identity of persons encountered in out-of-the-body experiences.

### A PROSPECTUS FOR SURVIVAL RESEARCH

HORNELL HART

Dr. Hart, Professor of Sociology at Florida Southern College, Lakeland, proposes two main projects. The first of these, "a crucial scientific verification of survival," calls for the scientific testing of Robert Crookall's conclusions, as set forth in *The Supreme Adventure* (Jas. Clarke & Co., 1961) and *The Study and Practice of Astral Projection* (Aquarian Press, 1961). In these works, Dr. Crookall compiled cases of ESP projection experiences and mediumistic messages respectively, in which living and deceased persons describe the process of leaving their physical bodies. On the basis of similarities in these accounts, Dr. Crookall argues for the objective validity of the experiences. Dr. Hart believes that there is a strong case in favor of Crookall's arguments, but stresses the need for rigorous statistical analyses of the data, for instance, according to the steps he outlined in the April, 1962 *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*.

Dr. Hart's second project is a cooperative study of dreams. In such a project, participants who are related, preferably by family or emotional ties, record their dreams and send the reports to a central office for analysis without giving each other

clues about the contents of the dreams. In the study of the dreams, particular emphasis would be given to descriptions of persons who seemed to be strangers or were known by the dreamer to be deceased. The participants should attempt to give complete descriptions of such persons, including their appearances and any messages they communicate. Dr. Hart suggests that such an analysis might throw light on the nature of human personality, embodied and disembodied. He also proposes the use of hypnosis as an aid in the study of dreams.

Hart is especially interested in "shared dreams," where two or more persons dream of meeting each other. Such dreams should be studied to determine if the dream surroundings are identical or similar. It would be important to establish what types of relationships are likely to promote a shared dream life.

The study of dreams, Dr. Hart proposes, could reveal a world which is intermediary between the spiritual and material ones and throw light "on the relation between the spiritual world, the 'astral world,' and the material world."

### EXPLORATIONS IN MEXICO

In February, the Project Director of the Foundation, W. G. Roll, made a three-week visit to Mexico where there is considerable public interest in psychical research. Whether or not this climate is conducive to the actual production of psychical phenomena, it helps to spread information about them once they have emerged. It is mainly for this reason that it was possible, in a few weeks, to see as many as 16 mediums, reincarnation subjects, and others allegedly possessing psychical gifts. The mediums investigated included the materialization medium, Luis Martinez, the Indian medium from Yautepec, Paulita Amaro, and mediums connected with the "Centro Espiritista Mexicana," and with the research group headed by Sra. Elodia Castol.

The explorations were assisted by Dr. Gutierrez Tibón, a philologist and anthropologist who has also been active in psychical investigations in Mexico, by Dr. John Edwards, formerly associated with the Department of Philosophy at the University of Texas and now active in reincarnation studies, and by Dr. Lotte von Lichtenberg, who is associated with the Martinez group.

Among the subjects studied were several apparently gifted with theta abilities, including persons with ostensible memories of past lives, subjects who seemed able to contact discarnate personalities, and token-object subjects. Plans are now in progress for a long-term research program with these subjects.

### INVESTIGATIONS IN NORTH CAROLINA AND MAINE

The studies by W. G. Roll with Mrs. Marie Hazen as the subject were continued in Durham in July, 1963 and April, 1964, while the tests in January, 1964, were done at the subject's home in western North Carolina. They ranged from free theta explorations to controlled token-object matching tests with a two-experimenter plan. Mrs. Helen Hawthorne was co-experimenter.

A similar program of tests was made by Roll with Mrs. Shirley Harrison in Durham in October, 1963 and in her home state of Maine in April, 1964. The experiments will be reviewed in a later issue of THETA.

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.

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