

A BULLETIN FOR RESEARCH ON THE PROBLEM OF SURVIVAL AFTER BODILY DEATH  
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## PARAPSYCHOLOGISTS MEET AT FREIBURG UNIVERSITY, WEST GERMANY

The eleventh annual convention of the Parapsychological Association was held at Freiburg University in West Germany, September 5-7, 1968, in response to an invitation by Professor Hans Bender, head of the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene. This Institute, which is wholly devoted to parapsychology, was created by Dr. Bender in 1950. Approximately 150 participants represented some 20 countries, ranging from Iceland to Tasmania.

After the welcoming addresses, nine research briefs were read, including one on a method for assessing mediumistic material by Mr. W. G. Roll and Dr. D. S. Burdick, Assistant Professor of Mathematics at Duke University. Another statistical approach to the analysis of verbal material was presented in one of the 43 convention papers by the English parapsychologist, Mr. Alan Mayne.

The President of the Association, Dr. Ian Stevenson, did not attend due to illness. In the presidential address, "The Substantiality of Spontaneous Cases," tape-recorded in German for the convention dinner, Stevenson appealed for the increased study of psi occurrences in everyday life.

Investigations with the Dahomey tribe in West Africa were reported by Mr. E. Brockhaus of the Freiburg Institute. The most successful tests involved the killing of chickens on the spoken command of a witch doctor. The animals were bought by Brockhaus and remained in his keeping throughout the experiment. Brockhaus' Dahomey subjects were less successful with card tests and similar methods, which led him to recommend that in tests with tribal societies, the experimental procedures should be adapted to their practices.

One afternoon was set aside for a reception at the Institute which is located on a hillside overlooking the Black Forest. On the last day of the convention, following the presentation of papers, several participants made an excursion to the Laboratory of Psychophysiology at the University of Strasbourg in France, headed by Dr. Remy Chauvin, and the site of many parapsychological tests. A paper describing a series of ESP experiments with mice was presented by Mr. Jean Meyer of the Laboratory.

Papers relevant to the survival issue are discussed below.

### Two German Poltergeists

The "Bremen Boy" case began in June, 1965, in a china shop in Bremen where glasses and dishes inexplicably tumbled from shelves and broke on the floor. The police and others who investigated the case could find no explanation for the occurrences. The turmoil seemed to revolve around a 15-year-old apprentice and the events ceased when he was dismissed. Drs. H. Bender, J. Mischo, U. Timm, and Mr. G. Vilhjalmsson came on the scene in March, 1966. At that time, the phenomena had been replaced by the spontaneous loosening of screws which the boy was installing with his employer, an electrician. One of these occurrences was witnessed by the Freiburg team. The events finally ceased in July, 1967.

From October, 1967, until January, 1968, another series of disturbances took place in a lawyer's office in the city of Rosenheim. Movements of wall pictures and ceiling lamps, explosions of lamp bulbs, and other incidents took place in the vicinity of a 19-year-old girl. The maintenance department of the town's electricity company, headed by Assistant Director, P. Brunner, investigated the

events, expecting to uncover a normal explanation. Mr. Brunner told the convention participants that deflections up to 50 amps were recorded on a voltage amplifier when some of the disturbances occurred. However, the house fuses, which should have blown as a result of such strong currents, remained intact. Two physicists, Drs. F. Karger and G. Zicha, were then called in by Dr. Bender. Karger related that they installed instruments to measure the current in the office mains as well as other electrical effects. Marked deflections were again obtained. However, irregularities in the house current were not responsible since the mains' voltage remained constant. Other known means to produce the deflections were also excluded, such as electrostatic charges, faulty equipment, and fraud. Karger thought that the disturbances were of a mechanical rather than of an electrical nature. They took place only when the young lady was present. She was brought to Freiburg for testing and succeeded in telepathy but not in PK.

Psychological studies of the two presumed agents were done by Dr. Mischo. He found that both had unstable personality structures with little ability to tolerate frustration. Tensions due to aggression, accumulating quickly and having no overt release, apparently were discharged through the poltergeist occurrences.

### The Psi Field

Dr. J. L. Artley, Professor of Electrical Engineering at Duke University, described a joint study with Roll of the attenuation effect in two poltergeist studies, the Seaford and Miami cases. The Seaford disturbances were investigated in 1958 by Dr. J. G. Pratt and Roll and the Miami case, in 1967 (see *Theta* 19). In the former, the agent was a 12-year-old boy and in the latter he was 19 years old. In both, the number of disturbances, which usually consisted of the movements and breakages of objects such as glasses, plates, and bottles, decreased with distance from the agent. A mathematical analysis of the attenuation showed that it fitted the exponential decay function. Many known energetic processes follow this function, including the conversion of light to heat energy as it penetrates water. In the case of poltergeist occurrences, there seems to be a conversion from psychical to kinetic energy. If PK

conforms to the principle of the conservation of energy, it makes sense that there should be a decrease with distance and that this should follow the exponential curve. The Parapsychology Foundation, Inc., which is headed by Mrs. Eileen J. Garrett, provided travel grants to several participants, including Dr. Artley, enabling him to present this paper.

The view that psi phenomena follow the conservation and other known physical principles was expressed by Roll in the psi field theory in 1964 at the previous P. A. convention in Europe (see *Theta* 7). According to this, people and inanimate physical objects are surrounded by psi fields. Thus in token object or psychometry tests, the subject responds to traces in the object's psi field produced by past events in the history of this object (or in objects and people with which this object was in contact). Results of card tests apparently relevant to this theory were also presented. Dr. Milan Ryzl suggested that the ESP scores of Pavel Štepanek, the well-known ESP subject discovered by Ryzl, can be understood in terms of "mental impregnation" of the cards. When P.S. makes a guess such as "green" about the color of a concealed card, this leaves a trace on it regardless of what its color is. Whenever this card is used again, P.S. is likely to call it "green." In a round table discussion, headed by Pratt, of tests he and others had done with P.S., it was brought out that the subject tended to respond to envelopes containing a certain card with the same guess regardless of the color of the card inside. Since the envelopes were hidden in folders, this "focusing effect" seemed to be due to ESP, perhaps of a trace in the psi fields of the envelopes. In series of tests with P.S. conducted by Pratt and Roll and reported by the latter, targets made of aluminum were alternated with some made of cardboard. The subject succeeded only with the cardboard targets, possibly because of the lower ESP transmission capacity of aluminum. This would be consistent with the psi field and related theories.

The psi field concept was also mentioned by Sister Justa Smith to explain the apparent influence of the hands of the psychic "healer," Mr. O. Estebany, on the activity of enzymes placed in bottles. She found

that the increase of activity was of about the same magnitude as an exposure to strong magnetic fields produces.

### Patterns of Reincarnation

A comparative study of reincarnation cases in Turkey, Alaska, and Ceylon, conducted by Stevenson, was read in absentia. In Turkey most reincarnation cases are found among the Alevis, followers of an Islamic sect which believes in reincarnation. In Alaska the cases come from the Tlingit Indians, who also hold this belief. In Ceylon the belief is widespread both among Buddhists and Hindus. The present study concerned 52 Turkish, 28 Ceylonese, and 47 Tlingit cases. In most of the Turkish and Tlingit cases, the informants were males, while in the Ceylonese cases about half were women. In neither of the first two groups did anyone claim to have belonged to another sex in the previous life while three of the Ceylonese did. In the Turkish and Ceylonese examples, as a rule the present and former personalities were not members of the same family but in the Tlingit cases, they generally were. Stevenson related this to the fact that the Tlingits attach great importance to family membership. In the Turkish cases the death of the previous personality as a rule was violent while the proportion of natural and violent deaths in the other two was about the same. In about half of the Turkish and Tlingit cases, fatal wounds, often inflicted during gun and knife fights, appeared on the reincarnated persons in the forms of birthmarks or other deformities. Such effects were rarely observed among the Ceylonese. Stevenson also found several instances of "announcing dreams" where someone, often the mother of the "incoming personality," dreamed that a deceased personality was to be reborn. Such dreams were reported in nearly half of the Turkish and Tlingit cases but in only one Ceylonese. In the Turkish and Tlingit reports, the previous person as a rule died when he was between 25-30 years old and in the Ceylonese cases, when he was even younger, at about 14 years. Finally, the intermission between death and rebirth took around a year in the Turkish cases, about two years in the Ceylonese, and about four years among the Tlingit Indians.

### Mediumistic Studies

In his talk about the personality of sensitives, Professor W. H. C. Tenhaeff, the Dutch parapsychologist, advised that testing methods be adapted to the personality of the subject if good results are to be obtained. He observed that the choice of subject matter of ESP impressions is often determined by the personality of the sensitive. For instance, one of his subjects was particularly interested in solving thefts by ESP and often succeeded. It turned out that this man as a youth had been accused by his father of stealing a sum of money which his brother had actually taken. Personality factors can also lead to avoidance reactions. Tenhaeff once gave his subject a cap that had belonged to a person who was wanted for the murder of an infant. The subject only experienced a feeling of fright. Some days later, however, he told Tenhaeff of a dream he connected with the cap, in which he saw a man smother a newborn child beneath pillows, which was correct. He then went on to say that in his own childhood he felt hostile toward his mother's newborn baby and once tried to injure it. He thought it was the possibility that he might have committed a similar crime which caused him to reject the first impression.

Tenhaeff also gave examples of the kinds of association found in remembering where, instead of the appropriate image, a related thought comes to mind. For instance, G. Croiset had the impression that a student had something to do with the Oedipus complex. This did not make sense to the student. Croiset then asked if the student that morning had seen someone who had produced a flood of tears. The student had indeed had such an experience at a hospital. The association, Tenhaeff suggested, was due to the fact that Croiset's brother, the actor, Max Croiset, often plays the title role in "Oedipus Rex," and when the king plucks out his eyes, artificially produces a stream of tears.

Two experiments with another sensitive, A. Orlop, were described by Dr. H. C. Berendt, an Israeli parapsychologist. The speciality of this sensitive is to make drawings of houses and localities he perceives by ESP. One test failed but in the other, the sensitive sketched several features of two houses belonging to Berendt and of

their locations. Orlop stated that his point of view is usually above the target. Sometimes he has the experience of travelling to the area and may notice incidental details on the way. On his "journey" to Israel he seemed to pass two filled reservoirs. Berendt discovered that two reservoirs are in fact located on the flight route to Jerusalem from Central Europe.

Croiset and Orlop were present at the meetings and several participants used the occasion to learn about the phenomena from the point of view of the sensitive.

One of the most investigated physical mediums is Rudi Schneider (1908-57) whose mediumship stretched over hundreds of experiments, some conducted under apparently controlled conditions. Mrs. A. K. Gregory presented her analyses of these studies, including the tests in which her late husband, C. C. L. Gregory, a for-

mer Director of the London Observatory, participated. The phenomena ranged from movements of objects to visible materializations and levitations of the medium's body. As a guard against fraud in the experiments, which were conducted in darkness, the table with the objects which were to be moved by PK was shielded by infrared beams. If anybody interfered with the objects, an alarm and/or a camera would be triggered. It was found that the alarm was activated but not by anything visible since the photographs showed nothing. Moreover, the interruptions in the infrared light took place when the medium's control ("Olga") said that "She was going into the ray." Sometimes the blockings preceded movements of the target objects. Mrs. Gregory suggested that this method might help detect effects in conventional PK tests even though there are no observable effects on the target objects.

### TRANCES<sup>1</sup>

By Stewart Wavell, Audrey Butt, and Nina Epton

Reviewed by Charles Honorton<sup>2</sup>

"Trance" is a concept which, at present, defies clear-cut definition. Not surprisingly however, it is frequently employed to describe a rather wide variety of behavior, from the responses of a subject in an hypnotic state induced by an external "operator," to those of the medium and shaman in their self-induced practices and rites. Since the concept lacks clear specification, it has little explanatory power although it is often used (as by the authors of the present book) to "explain" certain types of behavior.

This book represents a popular description of the trance-rites of a number of primitive cultures, as witnessed by the authors. While the book could hardly be called scientific, it is interesting and informative, particularly in the discussion of the motivation, "training," and phenomena associated with shamanism, from such diverse cultures as the Akawaio Indians of the Amazon, the Kris dancers of Bali, and the Temer aborigines of the Kelantan jungles.

While the phenomena associated with shamanistic trance including healing, "astral travel," and "direct voice" spirit communication (notwithstanding liaison with assorted nature spirits) suggest the possi-

ble fruitfulness of parapsychological investigation (an interpretation of the phenomena which the authors, often too easily, entertain), there is little in this volume which compellingly suggests parapsychical explanations. A more appealing explanation, perhaps, which the authors also suggest—albeit less enthusiastically—is that the trance rites fulfill basic needs in an unsure and insecure existence in the jungle. This is not to dismiss the possibility that certain of the phenomena may at times be parapsychically mediated. However, we must await the time when anthropologically oriented parapsychologists embark on a systematic study of such claims before seriously entertaining this interpretation. Beginnings have already been made in this direction<sup>3, 4</sup> and it is enough to hope that the contribution of Wavell, Butt, and Epton will encourage further exploration.

<sup>1</sup> New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1967, 253 pp., \$7.95.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Honorton is Research Associate in the William C. Menninger Dream Laboratory, Department of Psychiatry, Maimonides Medical Center, Brooklyn, New York.

<sup>3</sup> E. Brockhaus. "Possibilities and Limits for Research in Paranormal Phenomena in West Africa." Paper read at the eleventh annual convention of the Parapsychological Association, Freiburg, West Germany, September 5-7, 1968.

<sup>4</sup> R. Rose. *Living Magic*. New York: Rand McNally, 1956. 240 pp., \$3.75.