

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

DOUGLAS JOHNSON JOINS "MEDIUMISTIC" PROJECT

The well-known English "medium," Douglas Johnson,¹ arrived in the United States in April, 1966, to participate in a month's experimentation at the Psychical Research Foundation in Durham, North Carolina. The fourteen persons who assisted in the earlier tests as "sitters" or target persons (TPs, see THETA 12) participated in the present series together with several others. Mr. William Service Jr. assisted as co-experimenter.

The main purpose of the tests was to determine if Mr. Johnson's ESP abilities function under controlled conditions. The question whether the medium uses his ESP to communicate with discarnate personalities, which he firmly believes he does, may be considered when it is known whether his ESP can operate in scientific tests.

In general, the results obtained from controlled experiments with mediums and sensitives are poorer than those they produce under their usual working conditions. While this may in part be ascribed to the reduction of sensory cues, the controlled tests appear to have a further inhibitory effect, probably of a psychological nature. In the past, we have attempted to reduce this effect by adhering as closely as possible to the mediums' normal working conditions while retaining a basic scientific framework. In order to obtain a clear impression of Mr. Johnson's usual approach, a substantial part of the program was devoted to informal sessions. It is hoped that an analysis of this material will reveal some of the characteristics of ESP as it operates under favorable conditions.

Each TP participated first in an informal session and then in a controlled one. No precautions were taken against sensory in-

formation in the informal sessions except that the medium was not told the TP's identity. Since Mr. Johnson did not ask the TPs for information about themselves, the only sensory clues were those provided by the physical presence of the TPs and by their reactions to Mr. Johnson's statements about them. The controlled sessions were similar to those in which Mrs. Hughes and Mr. Beyer took part (see THETA 12).

Like other mediums and sensitives, and ESP subjects in general, Mr. Johnson has no way of knowing at the time he has an impression or sees an image whether the experience is due to ESP or to his own mental processes. It is only if the inquirer indicates whether the medium's statements apply to him, to his deceased relatives, etc., that the medium can distinguish impressions that are due to ESP from those that derive from his own thoughts and associations. If Mr. Johnson found that his statements about a specific topic did not apply, he usually gave it up unless he believed it concerned facts not known to the TP at the time, such as future events. In the formal sessions where there was no feedback of this sort, Mr. Johnson complained of being unable to tell whether he was "talking nonsense."

The results of the controlled tests are not yet known. As regards the informal sessions, several TPs were amazed at Mr. Johnson's ability to provide names or descriptions of specific events in their lives or the lives of deceased relatives, though he could not have learned the facts normally from their reactions to his statements or from other sensory clues.

As before, the "Identikit" was used in the formal tests. When Mr. Johnson received an impression of a face, usually that of a deceased communicator con-

¹ Mr. Johnson is featured on the television program, "The Baffling World of ESP," arranged by the American Broadcasting Corporation for July 16, 1966.

nected with the TP, he attempted to reproduce this, using the Identikit transparencies (see THETA 12). There were also token object matching experiments in which Mr. Johnson tried to match blank cards that had been in the TP's possession with hair samples belonging to these persons. The results of these and the other tests will be presented in a later issue of THETA.

In the psychological part of the program, Mr. Johnson was given the MMPI, the Rorschach, and a psychiatric interview. The psychological tests will be evaluated by Drs. John Altrocchi and Carl Eisdorfer. The interview was conducted by Dr. O. Lee Trick. All three are affiliated with the Department of Psychiatry at Duke University. The MMPI was also given to the TPs to determine whether there is a relation between the TP's personality and the medium's success with him.

As part of the program, group experiments were conducted with the assistance of Mr. Johnson in the hope of finding persons with psychical abilities. These sessions were similar to the "development classes" he conducts in London. Out of some twenty persons who participated in these informal sessions, three showed evidence of psychical abilities. The experiments will be continued after Mr. Johnson's departure, with a view to controlled testing.

THE ENIGMA OF OUT-OF-BODY TRAVEL

By Susy Smith¹

Reviewed by C. T. Tart²

Susy Smith's new book on out-of-the-body travel is a clearly written and entertaining introduction to the subject. It describes typical spontaneous cases, experimental attempts to produce the phenomena, apparitions, experiences of prominent "astral travelers," and some of the theoretical attempts at explanation of the phenomena. Unlike many of the more "occult" books on this subject, Miss Smith shows a welcome sense of humor in discussing her subject, as well as an awareness of the limitations of human testi-

mony and the conclusions to be drawn from it. She realizes that most of the "explanations" of the phenomenon are semantic word-magic, webs of words that may make us feel more comfortable psychologically, but which do not increase our understanding or control of the phenomenon at all.

According to the dust jacket, the book is addressed to the intelligent lay reader, and the bibliography is adequate to guide the interested reader into the more technical and scholarly works on this subject. A professional is not entitled to indulge in detailed technical criticism of a work intended for the layman, but should be concerned with adequacy of representation of his field to the public. By and large I feel that Miss Smith has done an excellent job here, although I do wish she had distinguished between material which is widely accepted in the field and that which is not. For instance, the fact that out-of-the-body *experiences* have been reported throughout recorded history by many cultures is about as solid a fact as one can have—you can check it at any library. On the other hand, such statements as, "A more elaborate technique on which some experimental work was done was to place the hands in a beam of ultraviolet rays passed through special filters, so that the amount of ordinary light was almost nil. By this means many people have been enabled to see the rays" (of the aura) "more clearly and easily than usual" (page 50), are considerably more debatable as to truthfulness, and tend to give the lay reader the impression that we know much more about the phenomenon than we do.

My only other major quarrel with Miss Smith's book is that she is too pessimistic about our ability to learn more about out-of-the-body travel. She emphasizes that our knowledge is based on "testimony," and while we are all aware that human testimony is prone to error, we should not implicitly assume (as I fear that even too many parapsychologists do) that human testimony is completely worthless. One of the greatest contributions to modern thought, Carl Jung's Analytic Psychology, is based almost exclusively on human testimony, and that mainly from psychiatric patients whose testimony seems even more likely to be distorted by personal factors

than that of the generally "normal" people who report out-of-the-body experiences. Yet Jung observed thematic similarities in the testimony of patients' dreams and visionary experiences, and parallels to ancient and modern myths which led him to the concept of archetypal experiences. Out-of-the-body experiences also constitute archetypal experiences, occurring as they do throughout history, and mainly to persons who have never heard of the phenomena. Thus we can collect detailed accounts of these experiences and ask many questions which will enhance our understanding of the phenomenon. What are the basic similarities that cut across history and culture? Are there several types of out-of-the-body experiences? How are they influenced by the cultural background of the experimenter? By his personal psychological characteristics? What proportion of such experiences contain information about the real world that implies the operation of ESP? Do these types of experiences differ from those where ESP does not seem to be involved? Etc., etc.

I am also more optimistic than Miss Smith in another way: although we have largely depended on testimony in the past, and can reap a rich harvest by detailed analysis of such testimony, using modern psychological techniques, in the future, we need not be confined to *only* a post hoc analysis of testimony. I disagree when Miss Smith states, "It certainly won't ever be possible to put an astral body . . . into a test tube . . ." (page 164). Given enough money (parapsychology's perennial lack) and initiative to search through large populations for subjects who can have out-of-the-body experiences at will, we can ask them to perform in a modern laboratory. Then we can not only find out what sort of psycho-physiological state accompanies these experiences (I am writing up material on the results of a small study in this), we can have our subjects *try* to put their "astral bodies" into the more sophisticated versions of test tubes that modern science has provided, such as spectrometers, cloud chambers, radiation counters, electrostatic voltmeters, etc.! As Miss Smith recognizes, the implications for our view of the world that might result from enhanced understanding of out-of-the-body experiences could be enormous.

Editor's Note: Dr. Tart is currently study-

ing out-of-the-body experiences by means of detailed questionnaires mailed to persons reporting these experiences. If you have had one or more out-of-the-body experiences and would like to assist in this project, Dr. Tart would appreciate hearing from you. (Dr. Charles T. Tart, Box 294, University Hospital, Charlottesville, Virginia, 22901).

THE PSYCHEDELIC READER¹ and THE PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCE²

By Timothy Leary et al.

Reviewed by Stanley Krippner³

In 1963, Harvard University dismissed Timothy Leary and a colleague from its instructional staff for purported mismanagement of a research program investigating the effects of psychedelic drugs. Since that time, Leary's difficulties with academic, legal, and medical Establishments have refused to abate; he and his psychedelic colony have been thrown out of Mexico and refused entry into the British West Indies. Leary has been arrested twice on marijuana charges and faces a lengthy prison term. In the meantime the ex-Harvard psychologist has produced two books which present highly provocative viewpoints on the use of LSD and other psychedelic ("mind-manifesting") drugs. This legacy, rather than Leary's headline-making personal activities, should be examined to assess the validity of his position.

The Psychedelic Reader consists of 16 articles selected from the first four issues of the quarterly journal, *Psychedelic Review*, which was inaugurated in 1963. Leary's two contributions discuss mystical elements in the novels of Herman Hesse and the interpretation of religious experience. The latter article contains several stimulating notions: psychedelics allow the user to see through "secular games" and the absurdities of culture; psychedelics could well be used "as routinely . . . as organ music and incense to assist in the attainment of religious experience."

Unfortunately, Leary's prose is often un-

¹ Edited by Gunther M. Weil, Ralph Metzner, and Timothy Leary. New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1965. 260 pp. \$5.95.

² By Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, and Richard Alpert. Same publisher, 1964. 159 pp. \$5.00.

³ Dr. Krippner is Director of the Dream Laboratory, Department of Psychiatry, Maimonides Hospital, Brooklyn, New York. His telepathy experiments with dreaming subjects, conducted in collaboration with Dr. Montague Ullman and Mr. Sol Feldstein, are receiving wide attention in psychiatric and parapsychological circles.

¹ New York: Helix Press, Garrett Publications, 1965. 189 pp., \$4.95.

² Dr. Tart is Instructor at the Department of Psychiatry, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va. He has been active in parapsychology for several years and has published in the professional journals of the field.

clear and filled with esoteric jargon. In addition, it frequently seems excessively hostile in tone; the psychiatric Establishment is described as "inquisitorial"; the mystic is portrayed as "always in opposition to or outside of social institutions." It may well be that the scientific and scholarly world would pay more attention to Leary's ideas if he demonstrated an ability to "play cultural games" more adroitly himself. His message is worthy of consideration (and will continue to be pertinent as long as there is a lack of self-knowledge and personal freedom in the world) but his manner of presentation will put many otherwise sympathetic readers on the defensive.

In contrast to Leary's contribution is a paper, "The Individual as Man/World," by Alan Watts, probably the finest article in the book. Clearly and gently written, yet thoroughly unconventional in its point of view, Watts' presentation lucidly describes an "organism-environment field" that is in opposition to the traditional model of "an ego locked in the skin."

Many parapsychologists are of the opinion that the psychedelics may enhance paranormal ability. The articles by Gordon Wasson and R. E. Schultes note that New World Indians have used psychedelic plants for psychic purposes. In 1858, a geographer described how ayahuasca (a substance derived from a wild vine) was employed to foresee war and to "decipher plans of the enemy." The "sacred mushrooms" of Mexico are currently used for divinatory purposes.

Among the other articles of interest to psychical researchers are those by Gerald Heard and Julian Huxley as well as the excellent bibliography by S. M. Unger. The papers in this volume are uneven in quality but the book is to be highly recommended as presenting general information as well as varied positions on the medical and non-medical uses of LSD and similar substances.

The Psychedelic Experience is a training manual devised for use during sessions with mescaline, psilocybin, or LSD. It is

based on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* specifically the English translation by W. Y. Evans-Wentz (published in 1960 by Oxford University Press). For the Mahayana Buddhists, the book was used to prepare adherents not only for death but for alterations in consciousness (such as out-of-the-body experiences). Leary and his colleagues have adapted this material for sessions in which a "guide" attempts to prepare "voyagers" for psychedelic "trips," and to bring them through the experience safely.

As an adapted translation, this volume suffers from such jargon as, "With your ego left behind you, the brain can't go wrong," and ". . . the ever-changing jeweled mosaic of the retina." The retina is also described as a "multi-layered swamp of billions of rods and cones"—a statement which is literally in error.

On page 49 of the manual, the authors have made a mistake in their adaptation of the Evans-Wentz translation. They speak of the "Eight Wrathful Deities"; however, the Evans-Wentz translation (on page 131) enumerates only seven.

This volume would be of interest to many psychical researchers because it mentions experiences which are "beyond words, beyond space-time, beyond self"—therefore, possibly relevant to ESP and PK as well as to survival research. It would seem worthwhile to utilize this manual *without* psychedelic drugs in attempts to obtain altered consciousness in subjects undergoing parapsychological testing.

After reading these two books, one cannot help but be impressed with the original conceptualizations of Timothy Leary. I, personally, feel that these concepts are worthy of serious professional consideration and that, in the years to come, they will be given more attention than the private life of their originator. Today the situation is reversed, which makes it all the more necessary for parapsychologists to separate the man from his ideas so as not to overlook a number of brilliant insights and provocative procedures which could be of value to the field.

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