

A BULLETIN FOR RESEARCH ON THE PROBLEM OF SURVIVAL AFTER BODILY DEATH  
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## SYMPOSIUM ON RESEARCH IN SURVIVAL

A symposium to examine new ideas for survival research, arranged by Dr. Ian Stevenson, was held on September 9, 1967, at the Barbizon-Plaza Hotel, New York City. Dr. Stevenson is Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia and a member of the Board of Directors of the Psychical Research Foundation, Inc. The time and place of the meeting were selected to take advantage of the presence of several parapsychologists interested in survival who had attended the convention of the Parapsychological Association (see THETA 19).

In addition to Dr. Stevenson, the participants were Dr. E. Bokert, New York City, Mrs. Laura A. Dale, editor of the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* (ASPR), Dr. F. C. Dommeyer, Professor of Philosophy, San Jose State College, California, Dr. Lawrence LeShan, Union Theological Seminary, Dr. Karlis Osis, Director of Research at the ASPR, Dr. J. G. Pratt, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia, Dr. Gertrude R. Schmeidler, Professor of Psychology at the University of New York, Dr. Charles T. Tart, Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of California at Davis, and Mr. W. G. Roll, Project Director of the Psychical Research Foundation, Inc. The following topics were discussed.

### A Pseudo Problem?

Dommeyer wondered whether the survival question is a scientific problem capable of being asked in meaningful terms and answered even in principle. Tart replied that the question can be put in behavioral terms: a person can be identified in terms of behavior clusters and the question is whether these or any of them survive his death.

LeShan found it difficult to conceive of evidence for survival if there are no known

limitations to ESP and PK from and by the living. Osis noted that his linkage experiments were concerned with this problem. Roll said that such studies, those concerning the attenuation of ESP with distance, and the evidence that ESP depends on the memory record of the ESP receiver, indicate that ESP does have certain limitations and that it will therefore become possible to bring the survival hypothesis to empirical test. He regarded studies on the limitations of ESP and PK and the development of reliable methods of observation and assessment of occurrences indicating survival as of prime importance. Before it can be determined whether a phenomenon is even suggestive of survival, it is necessary to establish that it is a genuine parapsychological occurrence.

### Survival of Skills

Dommeyer asked whether there is any evidence that skills survive. Schmeidler referred to the case reported in the ASPR *Proceedings* (1909, 3, 1-469) where the painter R. S. Gifford, after his death, apparently communicated through F. L. Thompson causing him to paint in Gifford's style. Stevenson mentioned his investigation of the Jensen entity which could speak and understand some Swedish though the hypnotized person it communicated through did not know this language.

Stevenson referred to the distinction made by Michael Polanyi between knowledge *about* and knowledge *how*. The former is acquired passively while the latter is reached only through practice. Although a medium using ESP may get information about things, there is no evidence that anyone by ESP alone can acquire skills, or knowledge *how*.

Tart thought that the distinction between the two kinds is one of degrees of units of information and that the establishment of identity and survival depends on

the amount of information rather than on any special kind. It is a question of quantifying the amount of information. Roll said that the question is essentially an empirical one: if it is actually found that in non-theta ESP only smaller amounts of information (knowledge about) are communicated, then we should base our research on that finding and look for theta evidence in the larger blocks of information that constitute skills (knowledge how). Pratt suggested that spontaneous cases suggestive of survival should be compared with those without survival elements to determine if there are types of information in the former which are absent from the latter.

### Combination Lock Test

As a refinement of the postmortem test suggested by Dr. R. H. Thouless (see THETA 2), Stevenson proposed a test where the message to be communicated after a person's death is a series of numbers for a combination padlock which had belonged to that person. Before his death several mediums are to try opening the lock by means of ESP. If they fail, but if a medium obtains the code after his death, apparently from his surviving personality, this would be evidence that he had survived. The method has the advantages of Thouless' test but is simpler to carry out both for the person who owns the padlock and for the mediums who will try to open it before and after his death since each trial is simply checked by whether or not it will open the lock. To facilitate recall Stevenson said that the combinations of numbers could be made to fit a word or sentence. The idea for the test was suggested by a spontaneous theta communication from a man to his wife giving the combination of a lock to a box with important documents he had left behind.

When attempts are made to have mediums open the padlocks by ESP before death, Tart suggested they should include a reward to provide motivation. Schmeidler thought that such locks should belong to the persons for a long time and be frequently opened by them to make recall easy.

### Voice Prints

Stevenson proposed that "voice prints," graphic representations of a person's vocal

qualities, should be explored as a means for establishing survival. Two elements influence a person's voice, the size of his voice box and the use of the articulators. While the former is determined by physiological factors, the use of the latter is a skill learned primarily from the parents. He suggested that voice prints should be made of the voices of living persons. After death, with the collaboration of mediums who apparently reproduce the voices of deceased communicators, voice prints of these should be obtained and compared with those made when they were alive. Since voice prints evidently cannot be changed or copied voluntarily, this method, if successful, might afford objective evidence of survival.

Roll noted that the medium, Douglas Johnson, when controlled by "Chiang" speaks with a somewhat different voice and that it might be interesting to see if the two voice prints are significantly different. Other participants referred to other mediums who appear to speak with the voices of the deceased. Pratt considered that in some cases the medium's own voice may be mixed with the theta agent's, requiring a method to distinguish overlapping voice prints.

Tart proposed that in the case where the same control speaks through different mediums, the voice prints might be compared for similarities. Since there might be degrees of similarities rather than complete correspondences between the voices of people when alive and when communicating through mediums, Tart also suggested that pairs of voice prints from before and after death be obtained from several persons. The pairs of prints should then be separated, the task being for an expert in voice print analysis to match the pair from the same theta agent.

LeShan asked what the limits of ESP were in this regard and if it might not be possible for mediums to copy voice prints by means of ESP. Roll suggested that this question could be decided by ESP experiments where such attempts are made. Pratt suggested that in such a test the medium might be given the names of both living and dead persons without being told which are deceased and then attempt to communicate with both. If the best voice print matches are produced by the voices

of deceased communicators, then this might be suggestive of survival.

Stevenson was in favor of establishing a "bank of tapes" for voice recordings which could be used after the death of the persons for comparative studies of voice prints. In order to provide motivation, the persons who want to participate in this project might each furnish a registration fee, say of \$500, which would be returned to their heirs if and when the deceased person had succeeded in providing proof of his identity.

### Neurological and Psychological Tests

Bokert suggested that a group of persons who lack the alpha EEG ("brain wave") rhythm should participate in a survival test. After death an attempt should be made to communicate with them through a medium whose EEG has pronounced alpha rhythms. If these are suppressed while the medium appears to be under the control of the "non-alpha" theta agents, this would be evidence for their survival.

Tart thought that attempts might also be made to see if neurological reactions to certain words elicited before death and afterward, through a medium, remain the same. So far, as Tart pointed out, neurological investigations of mediums in trance and normal states have not shown any differences. These studies, however, have only been exploratory. It is possible that there are undetected differences between the two states. Osis questioned if people's reactions to words are sufficiently consistent over long periods and if changes could not be expected after death.

Bokert said that handwriting might be used as a means of identification in the case of mediums using automatic writing and Osis thought that characteristic spelling errors might afford clues of identification. Schmeidler suggested the "draw a person test" for comparison before and after death.

## INVESTIGATIONS IN NORFOLK AND LONG ISLAND

William T. Joines<sup>1</sup>

### Norfolk Disturbances

The reported disturbances occurred in the apartments of Mr. and Mrs. W. W.

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Joines is Assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering at Duke University.

### Survival of Fittest

Tart referred to G. I. Gurdjieff's opinion that highly evolved and integrated personalities are more likely to survive than others. Perhaps it should be asked what can be done to an individual so he is likely to survive death. Tart suggested that the people who are best able to accept stress might be best able to survive their death. Perhaps people could be trained to survive death and to communicate by learning to withstand stress and to operate effectively and with task orientation during states of altered consciousness. He noted that some mediumistic communications suggest that theta agents are in a different state of consciousness than living people. Osis said that the question to be asked is what the characteristics are of persons who have given best evidence of their survival and Roll said we needed to know who is the best communicator rather than who is most likely to survive. Stevenson recalled a conversation about reincarnation he had heard last summer between two Turkish Arabs. One asserted that the only persons who reincarnate are those who have been murdered, his friend replying that everybody reincarnates but only murder victims remember their previous reincarnation.

Osis suggested that a person who is willing to communicate with the experimenter while under the influence of drugs such as LSD might be the kind of person who would be willing and able to communicate after death.

Dr. Stevenson is seeking participants for the combination lock test. Readers of THETA who would like to take part can write for instructions to Dr. Ian Stevenson, Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia 22901.

Franks and Mr. and Mrs. Paul Ruby. The Franks have five children, ages seven to three, and the Rubys have two, ages about four and three. The Franks occupied an upstairs apartment and the Rubys the

downstairs apartment directly underneath in an eight-unit apartment building. Mr. Franks and Mr. Ruby are naval enlistees, both about thirty years of age. The disturbances which were said to have started toward the end of August, 1967, continued until January, 1968, at which time Franks and Ruby received new location assignments from the Navy.

Among the incidents described by the Franks were the movement of furniture, the tearing of clothing and paper money, the sound of a baby crying, knocks, footsteps, cold spots within rooms, a broken window, and a cuckoo clock that fell from the wall and landed on the floor about eight feet from the wall. The disturbances mentioned by the Rubys were less intense and less frequent. These included cold spots, rattling sounds in the kitchen and the movement of kitchen utensils.

In response to a phone call to Mr. W. G. Roll from Mr. Jack Kestner, a reporter at the Norfolk *Ledger-Star*, and to reports from Franks, the case was first investigated November 10-12, 1967. Mr. John Stump, a psychology student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, collaborated in the study. The investigators brought a tape recorder, a camera, and three thermistor-type temperature measuring instruments. During the two days and nights of this investigation no cold spots were detected by the instruments, even in areas where Mrs. Ruby claimed she felt them. No unusual sounds or movements were observed or detected during the daylight hours. However, both nights, with all adults in the Ruby's downstairs apartment, unusual sounds from the upstairs apartment were heard by both investigators as well as by the Rubys and Franks. The noises, which were not attributed to the children, sounded like furniture being moved, an object rolling or

tumbling across the floor, and a heavy creaking and thumping of the floor. During the time of these occurrences, the tape recorder was left on in the upstairs apartment and the investigators wrote down a description of each sound and the time to the nearest second, so that the written record could be compared with the tape recording. Reasonably good correlation between these two records was obtained during both nights, and some of the sounds still lack an acceptable explanation.

Another investigation was made November 22-25 by Mr. Stump and Dr. John L. Artley, Professor of Electrical Engineering at Duke, with much the same results, except that the frequency of the occurrences was greatly diminished.

### Long Island Disturbances

The reported incidents occurred within the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Vignola and their two daughters, aged eight and three, in East Northport, Long Island, New York. The disturbances, as reported by Mrs. Vignola (age thirty-two), started in September, 1967, and consisted of antique objects moving or falling, a knot in the weight chain of an antique clock, the clock starting of its own accord, a door slamming, footsteps in the vacant attic, and the feeling of an unknown presence in the room containing the antique objects and furniture.

After several telephone conversations with Mrs. Vignola and her seven-page reply to the "Questionnaire for Recurring Unexplained Disturbances" (THETA 16), arrangements were made to visit the home in order to investigate the alleged disturbances. During the investigator's stay in the home, February 16 and 17, 1968, there were no disturbances and most of the reported incidents were attributed to familiar physical causes.

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