

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

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## THE PSYCHICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION INC.

THETA is published on a two-year basis. Since the present issue marks the beginning of a third year, this may be an appropriate occasion to inform new readers and remind old ones about the organization and purposes of the P.R.F.

The Foundation was created by Mr. Charles E. Ozanne in August, 1960, to promote scientific studies of the problem of survival of human personality after death. It had been in existence eight months when Mr. Ozanne died on April 5, 1961, at the age of 94. The establishment of the P.R.F. was his last and most outstanding act of support to the field of psychical research. It was not his only one. He had given generously to other organizations, including the American Society for Psychical Research and the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory (whose assets have now been taken over by the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man). He also contributed to the literature of the field with articles in the *Hibbert Journal* and the *Journal of the A.S.P.R.*, and he made a personal study of the Boston medium, Mrs. Soule. His main interest was research on the problem of survival after death, and the P.R.F. was to become the first and, so far, only organization devoted solely to this.

Mr. Ozanne appointed Dr. J. G. Pratt President of the Foundation and made Professor H. H. Price Vice-President. Mr. Ozanne's association with Dr. Pratt dates back to 1936 when he provided a grant for the publication of Pratt's study of the mediumship of Mrs. Eileen Garrett. Dr. Pratt is now pursuing his parapsychological research at the School of Medicine, the University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Professor Price, who is a member of Oxford University, England, is a former President of the Society for Psychical Research, an organization whose approach to medi-

umistic and survival research deeply influenced Mr. Ozanne. Other members of the Board of Directors are Dr. Ian Stevenson and Mr. A. R. Bennett. Dr. Stevenson is Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at the University of Virginia. The work in parapsychology for which he is best known is his studies of apparent cases of reincarnation. Mr. Bennett is Vice-President of Wachovia Bank and Trust Company, the fiscal agent of the P.R.F.

Mr. Ozanne appointed Mr. W. G. Roll Project Director of the Foundation. They first met in 1954 at the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory while Roll was spending some weeks there during his summer vacation from Oxford University, where he was then a graduate student. Their association was resumed in 1957 when Roll became a member of the Duke staff. In 1959 a symposium was arranged by Dr. J. B. Rhine, Director of the Laboratory, on "Incorporeal Personal Agency." Among the contributors were Pratt, Price, and Roll, who discussed, respectively, "Methods of Evaluation of Verbal Material," "Apparitions: Two Theories," and "The Contribution of Studies of 'Mediumship' to Research on Survival after Death." The following year Mr. Ozanne provided a special grant to the University to enable Roll to conduct research in survival there before the P.R.F. went into operation in January, 1961.

As part of the By-Laws of the Foundation, Mr. Ozanne made provision for the establishment of an Advisory Committee to be selected from persons who had made special contributions to the Foundation or survival research generally. This committee now consists of Dr. John Artley, Professor C. D. Broad, Mrs. Dorris Carlson, Professor E. R. Dodds, Professor C. J. Ducasse, Dr. Portia Hamilton, Dr. Hornell Hart, Dr.

Gardner Murphy, Dr. Karlis Osis, and Dr. R. H. Thouless.

In April, 1963, the P.R.F. began publication of THETA in order that the work of the Foundation, as well as other research and educational efforts concerned with the survival problem, might become more widely known. "Theta," the first letter of the Greek word meaning death, "thanatos," was chosen to describe phenomena suggestive of survival of personality after death and as the title of this bulletin. (For the definitions of terms used in THETA, see the glossary at the end of this issue.)

By the terms of his will, Mr. Ozanne left his estate to the Foundation and hereby ensured its long-term support. The funds, however, are not such as to allow any expansion of its activities. For this we must wait till others step forward who share Mr. Ozanne's conviction that the methods of science can be applied to the theta problem.

## THE JOURNALS

It is one of THETA'S purposes to inform readers about other publications relevant to the survival problem. The first issue of THETA contained a reading list of books and articles printed up to April, 1963. The following is a survey of papers which have appeared since then.

The *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* (880 Fifth Avenue, New York 21, N.Y.): The Dutch parapsychologist, George Zorab, summarizes 20 RSPK cases between the years 1850 and 1958 under the title "A Further Comparative Analysis of some Poltergeist Phenomena: Cases from Continental Europe" (58, 1964, 105-27). A distinction is made between "haunts" and "poltergeists." The former mostly consist of subjective or mental experiences, such as seeing apparitions, and the latter of objective or physical phenomena, such as the movements of furniture and household effects; Zorab restricts himself to this type of event. Each case is summarized according to the time and place of the occurrence, the principal persons involved, and the main characteristics of the phenomena. Several cases involve unexplained stone-throwings, the stones sometimes appearing in closed rooms. In 18 of the cases the phenomena were witnessed by outsiders, including police officers, scientists, or other pre-

sumably trained observers. In half of the cases there were clear indications that the effects were produced by a living member of the household and in none were there suggestions of a theta agency. This, of course, is to be expected in view of the initial exclusion of "haunting" phenomena. A survey of these, including a comparative analysis with the "poltergeist" type, would be useful.

The April 1965 issue has the first installment of papers for the P.R.F. symposium "What Next in Survival Research?" (59, 1965, 146-166). There is an introduction by W. G. Roll and papers by two American psychologists and psychical researchers, Dr. Gardner Murphy and Dr. Gertrude R. Schmeidler, and by the South African mathematician, J. H. M. Whiteman. These articles are presented in abstract in THETA 4, 5, and 6.

*The Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* (1 Adam and Eve Mews, London, W 8, England): G. W. Lambert has two short articles on "Phantom Scenery" concerning hallucinatory experiences of houses and landscapes (42, 1963, 1-6; 1964, 346-8). In "A Latent Apparition?" (1963, 65-8) a theta agent seems to signal her presence to her friend's husband, whom she never met, rather than directly to her friend. "An Infant's Perception of a Death," (1963, 124-6) is an account by Robert Crookall in which a man's apparition was seen at his death by his three-year-old grandson. In the same number Lucian Landau describes "An Unusual Out-of-the-Body Experience" (126-8) in which the apparitional form of a lady who had an out-of-the-body experience was seen by her fiancé. The case has the unusual feature that she reportedly brought an object (a rubber toy) with her which she left in her fiancé's room.

"On Quantitative Evaluations of 'Mediumistic' Communications" is a discussion by C. T. K. Chari (1964, 215-23) on methods of assessing verbal material. He emphasizes the need to deal not only with the memories of the presumed theta agent, but also with such personality characteristics as mannerisms and tone of voice.

In "Scottish Haunts and Poltergeists II" (1964, 223-7) G. W. Lambert argues that the noises and physical effects, such as moving furniture, were caused by earth tremors, and that the visions of apparitions,

etc., were secondary psychological elaborations. In "Beavor Lodge: An Old Ghost Story Retold" (1964, 273-82) he advances the theory that the ghostly sounds were due to the movements of underground water and that the apparitions were in fact clouds of mist.

In his "Studies in the Automatic Writing of Mrs. Verrall. I. Who Was Ralph Nevile?" (1964, 389-400) Lambert discovered, through a piece of painstaking historic research, the existence of a seventeenth century clergyman, Ralph Nevile, who seemed to emerge in 1902 in the automatic writing of Mrs. Verrall, one of the S.P.R. mediums. Lambert speculates that in the absence of other links between the ostensible theta agent and the subject, she had a special affinity with victims of political or religious persecution. The records indicate Nevile was such a person.

In the same issue Ian Stevenson, in "The Blue Orchid of Table Mountain," (401-9) presents a case where a soldier, killed in the last war, revealed himself to a mediumistic aunt and communicated to her a message for his mother.

*International Journal of Parapsychology* (29 West 57 Street, New York, N. Y.): Alain Assailly, a French physician specializing in neuroendocrinology, reports in "Psychophysiological Correlates of Mediumistic Faculties" (5, 1963, 357-70) that several mediums he has studied had tendencies towards ecchymoses, rheumatism, and hypothyroidism. In the same issue, T. M. Fraser, Jr., shows how spiritistic beliefs and practices are interwoven with Islamic religion in "Malay Spiritualistic Ritual in Southern Thailand" (387-406), and in a later issue (6, 1964, 329-61) a chapter is presented from a book by Mircea Elaide under the title "Shamanism in South-east Asia and Oceania." This is preceded by a short introduction by Misha Titiev in which he relates some functions of the shaman, such as retrieving the souls of patients from the other world and guiding the dead.

Siemeon Edmunds in "Psychological Elements in Spiritualistic Testimony" (6, 1964, 289-301) warns against the dangers of malobservation, particularly of alleged psychical phenomena. Several examples are described where the preconceptions of witnesses caused them to be duped by simple fraud or even induced hallucinations.

In "The Poltergeist Man" (423-45) Mary Williams, a Jungian analyst, describes apparent RSPK phenomena centering around a male patient which included raps heard both by her and the patient. Sometimes the patient felt that his body was controlled by the poltergeist entity. There is a postscript by A. R. G. Owen (445-50) in which it is suggested that the higher brain centers are involved in the production of RSPK because the agent is always a human being and the phenomena do not occur during normal sleep. Following this, in the article "Brownie, Incubus and Poltergeist" (455-68), Owen surveys folklore and legends in which spiritual entities are blamed for what possibly were genuine RSPK effects.

In "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Sherlock Holmes in Spiritland" (7, 1965, 33-56) Sherman Yellen examines the factors which may have been responsible for A. Conan Doyle's uncritical acceptance of spiritualistic beliefs.

*Neue Wissenschaft* (Francke AG, Postfach, 3000 Bern 26, Switzerland): In "Der Spuk im Rogger-Haus in Emmenbrücke bei Luzern" (12, 1964, 34-38) Katharina Nager reports on RSPK disturbances that erupted in a house near Luzerne which was occupied by two young men. The phenomena consisted in the unexplained movements of objects and allegedly were witnessed by visitors. They ceased during a two-day absence of one of the occupants, perhaps pointing to him as the agent.

*The Churches Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies Quarterly Review* (54 Denison House Vauxhall Bridge Road London, S. W. 1, England): An English RSPK case "The York Poltergeist" is reported by Rev. F. G. Harrison (No. 43, March, 1965, 16-18). At the outset of the phenomena flooding occurred in a house though no leaks were found in the plumbing. Ensuing phenomena included the movements of pictures on the walls and the breakage of household items. It was established that there was friction between the owner, her elder sister, and the latter's companion. The destruction exclusively concerned their belongings. When they left, the events ceased. A twenty-year-old nephew of the landlady was also in the house. Harrison is of the opinion that her late husband used the nephew's psychic powers to rid his wife of her guests.

## RSPK INVESTIGATIONS

In January, 1965, W. G. Roll investigated a "haunted" house in Georgia. The phenomena included apparitions which were seen by several people and unexplained sounds, such as steps and knocks. In one instance, a visitor to the house felt overcome by an invisible force and fainted close to an open chimney that had a drop of three stories. Roll occupied the room in which the disturbances were said to be most violent, but none took place during the four days he was there. Interviews with persons who observed the phenomena suggested they could not all have been due to normal physical causes. The phenomena did not indicate the agency of anyone occupying the house but seemed, if genuine, to point to an energy source in the building. A lady who claimed to possess psychical abilities was shown the house without being told where the apparitions were seen. In several instances her experiences corresponded with those of others. Mrs. Eileen Garrett was asked to give her impressions by using a photograph of the house as a link and gave several statements that fitted the known facts.

In cooperation with Dr. Hans Naegeli, President of the Swiss S.P.R., Mr. Geir Vilhjalmsson conducted interviews and wrote a report about one of the RSPK cases Dr. Naegeli told Roll about last summer (THETA 8). The phenomena took place from July, 1960, till August, 1961, in the village of Mashwanden on a farm belonging to Paul Leuthold and his family. Mr. Leuthold kept a diary of the events. The phenomena centered around the cattle barn and consisted in the movements of objects and of knocking and whistling sounds. An eighteen-year-old maid seemed to be connected with several of the incidents. The theory that she may have been the agent was supported by her responses to the Rorschach which showed great emotional inhibition.

On behalf of the P.R.F., Mrs. Eloise Yerger made an investigation of ostensible RSPK phenomena in an apartment occupied by a widow in Holyoke, Massachusetts. The disturbances mostly consisted of "footsteps" and tapping noises, some of which were heard by visitors. Mrs. Yerger's report indicated, however, that the phenomena were due to normal physical causes such as dripping water.

## GLOSSARY

**CLAIRVOYANCE:** ESP of a physical event.

**ESP (extrasensory perception):** Information obtained by a subject about an event without the use of known means of information.

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

**PRECOGNITION:** ESP of a future event.

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

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

**RSPK (recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis):** PK effects popularly known as hauntings or poltergeists.

**TELEPATHY:** ESP of a mental event.

**THETA AGENT:** A (hypothetical) surviving personality or part of one, responsible for theta phenomena.

**THETA-ESP:** An ESP response to a theta agent or to conditions in a "next world."

**THETA PHENOMENA:** Effects suggestive of the survival of personality or some part of it after bodily death, including theta-ESP and theta-PK.

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

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

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