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A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

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872ND ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT 12, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON
MONDAY, 28TH APRIL, 1947.

REVD. J. STAFFORD WRIGHT, M.A., IN THE CHAIR.

The following elections were made: Principal Andrew Martin, M.A., Ph.D., D.D., Fellow; Rev. Matthew Francis, M.Th., Fellow; Rev. W. E. Dalling, M.A., Fellow; S. Pattenden, Esq., Member; H. J. Salter, Esq., B.Sc., Member; Daryl Chase, Esq., M.A., Ph.D., Member; P. E. Purkiss, Esq., Associate; James J. Packer, Esq., Associate.

The CHAIRMAN then called upon Mr. P. O. Ruoff (in the absence of Mr. Leslie through illness) to read the paper.

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH IN THE LIGHT OF SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.

By W. E. LESLIE, ESQ.

MEN feel an urge to systematize their experiences, to arrange them in some sort of order or pattern. The various special sciences are the patterns in which different sets of experiences have been arranged. Philosophy takes these sets of patterns and seeks to arrange them in one comprehensive pattern. Experiences which refuse to be fitted into any scheme produce a feeling of discomfort which may range from mild uneasiness to fear, or even horror.

Psychical Research seeks to investigate some of these intractable experiences. It asks whether certain alleged events actually happened, what was their real nature, and whether and how they can be correlated with other similar facts and with the general order of nature. Perhaps at this point I should give a description of these phenomena, but it is very difficult to define them. Their nature will emerge as we progress.

If research is to be more than haphazard it should follow some sort of ordered method, which, however, must be flexible, lest we fall into the error of shaping our material to suit our method. Perhaps it would be safest to start from the known and feel our way gradually into the strange and unknown.

It is also wise to keep in mind the possibility that apparently diverse phenomena may, in reality, be varying manifestations of some common principle.

Let us start with a very well known phenomenon—sleep. We are all quite familiar with it, and yet when we come to examine it closely we soon find that there is much that we do not know about it. Even from the physiological standpoint there is not yet agreement as to its nature. The sleeper seems to be unconscious, yet he dreams. A mother will sleep undisturbed by many sounds, yet a faint cry from her child will wake her. A soldier may lie down near his gun and sleep in spite of its firing, yet he may be roused by the sound of an approaching shell. Some, usually children, will get up, walk about, and perform purposive actions while asleep. There are cases in which problems which have baffled the student in the evening have presented themselves ready solved in the morning, as though some part of him had worked on them during the night. Sometimes this process has presented itself to the sleeper in dramatic form. Professor Hilprecht had been working on a collection of seals, and was puzzled by an incomplete specimen. During the night he dreamed that a priest came to him and told him that he (the priest) had been commissioned to engrave a seal, for which purpose he had had to make use of part of another seal. In the morning the professor, following this hint, found the missing part, and his problem was solved. An account of the incident will be found in the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research Vol. XII. Apparently the Professor had noticed the peculiarities of the seal subconsciously, and this reached his dream consciousness during the night.

This case is of special interest, for it suggests that there is in man a dramatizing activity which may be responsible for dream activity and for the form in which telepathic impressions sometimes emerge in consciousness. At times these are externalised as hallucinations or apparitions. There may also be a link with the mechanism of mediumistic “controls” and “communicators.”

We have seen that in sleep “part” of the personality may be inactive, while other “parts” are alert. In this it resembles the hypnotic state from which it is sometimes indistinguishable. The state is often induced by the suggestion that the subject is falling asleep, and it may vary from a slight drowsiness with increased suggestibility to profound unconsciousness. So with sleep.

There are peculiarities of the waking state which seem to be due to a splitting of the ordinary personality into "parts." When we learn to play the piano every movement has to be consciously controlled. Afterwards most of these movements seem to take place automatically. There is an organized hierarchy of nerves and muscles functioning as a "part" of the self. This seems to happen in absentmindedness. Perhaps we set out to go to one place, and find that our feet have carried us to another. If our attention is highly concentrated on, for example, a book, other people may speak to us without attracting our attention. This can be carried further. If attention is highly concentrated it is possible to get into touch with the other "part" of the person—one might almost say the rest of the person, and get it to do simple actions without the knowledge of the "part" that is concentrated. It is easy to think of simple habitual movements in terms of muscular and nervous habit patterns: but something more is needed to explain these latter cases.

From "absent mindedness" to loss of memory is a short step. The condition is fairly common. Sometimes it lasts for a long time so that the patient may build up a new life in a strange place. Sometimes the new life alternates with the old. This sort of thing has been popularized by the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Such cases are so similar to those of multiple personality that it is difficult to draw the line between them. A condensed summary of the cases mentioned in McDougall's *Outline of Abnormal Psychology* (pp. 482-586) follows for the benefit of any who may not be familiar with the subject.

Mary Reynolds wakened one morning in the condition of a newborn infant except that she could say a few words. She learned very rapidly. After five weeks she woke in her normal state knowing nothing of what had passed in the interval. She alternated between these states for many years.

Rev. Thos Hanna had a bad fall. He also was found to be in an infantile condition on recovering consciousness. He also learned quickly. He began to dream of old friends unknown to him in his new life. Then for a week he would wake alternately as his old self and his new self. Then for a time he was conscious of both personalities until he was eventually cured.

Léonie was dull, melancholy, timid. Under hypnosis she became gay, lively, noisy, and called herself *Léontine*. Under deeper hypnosis there appeared *Léonore*, a serious and capable person who looked down on both *Léonie* and *Léontine*.

Félida X began to show hysterical symptoms at 13. After a short sleep she would waken quite healthy, but another sleep left her in the hysterical phase. The alternations lasted some years.

Marcelline's case was similar but her healthy phase had to be restored by hypnosis after each "relapse."

The B C A Case. This woman's symptoms began with her marriage. Her husband's sickness and death caused more strains, as did a severe emotional shock some years later. She developed three "personalities" called B, C, and A respectively. She was eventually cured, but B could be recalled under hypnosis.

Maria. Her troubles started with the tragic death of her father. She had premonitory symptoms for six years, and for the next two years two personalities controlled her body.

The Beauchamp Case. The original report on this case runs to nearly 600 pages and discloses the complicated relationships between three personalities B1, B3 (also called Salley) and B4.

The Doris Fischer Case fills three large volumes by Dr. W. F. Prince, but is outlined by Dr. T. Weir Mitchell in his *Medical Psychology and Psychological Research*. Here we have four personalities—Sick Doris, Real Doris, Margaret, and Sleeping Margaret. This last personality only manifests herself by speech during sleep. Sick Doris started with infantile knowledge like Mary Reynolds and the Rev. Hanna.

McDougall considered that these cases came under the heading of Abnormal Psychology. This does not mean that every detail can be given a psychological explanation: but that they do not give the impression that they cannot be related to the general body of psychological phenomena.

We must now return to the actions performed when the attention is concentrated elsewhere. Actions performed without the direction of the conscious will are called "automatisms." Some of them are quite familiar in "willing" games. An object is hidden in the room while one of the players is outside. He is then called back and asked to find it. Usually the hand of another player who knows where the object is is placed lightly on the searcher's head. He frequently finds the object without knowing how he has done so. No doubt many unconscious indications are given by other people in the room, but the chief factor is unconscious muscular guidance by the person whose hand rests on the searcher's head. In another game a watch is held by its chain by a lady and gentleman. It begins to swing in a way that is supposed to be connected with the sex of the players. They are both honestly convinced that they have not swung the watch, but that is what has happened. In yet another game a small pellet on the end of a thread is held inside a tumbler. It will swing and tap out messages. In another arrangement the pendulum is held in the middle of the letters of the alphabet arranged in a circle. It will then spell out words and phrases by swinging from letter to letter. The use of the Planchette is another example of unconscious muscular activity, as is also the motion of the diviner's rod. In all these cases the agent asserts most stoutly, and with perfect honesty that he has not attempted any movement. But if some step be taken to ensure that he cannot make any movement, nothing happens.

From planchette it is but a step to automatic script. The subject sits with pencil and paper, the attention is suitably distracted, and the hand scribbles or writes. Sometimes the involuntary movements are of the organs of speech—the person utters vague jumbled sounds or words, and sometimes complete phrases or connected discourses.

It often happens that what is spelled out, written, or spoken, purports to come from some outside source, usually a deceased person. At present, however, we have only been considering the nature of the automatic mechanism. Before considering the alleged communications from non-incarnate persons we must look at Telepathy and Clairvoyance.

Telepathy is the passage of ideas or emotions from one mind to another without the use of the senses. Clairvoyance is the ability to become aware of non mental phenomena without the

use of the senses. In a recent article Dr. J. B. Rhine has contended that most, if not all, the evidence for Telepathy may be due to Clairvoyance. (*Journal of Parapsychology* for September, 1944). Of course the alleged perception of non mental phenomena at once raises the philosophical problem as to whether such phenomena exist. Here are two simple illustrations of the sort of problem involved. Suppose a red ball is put in a box to make sure that a clairvoyant could not see it by ordinary vision. If she claims to "see" a red ball she is seeing something that does not exist, for the ball is not red in the dark. Or take an organ pipe tuned to "C" but not sounded. If the clairvoyant in another room claimed to "hear" the note "C" she would be hearing something that did not exist. Against this it might be said she was perceiving the colour or the sound precognitively or retrocognitively. As all experiments involving either Telepathy or Clairvoyance have been affected by the establishment of Precognition on a scientific basis we must see how this has been done. For a long time precognitive dreams have been recorded, but it is only quite recently that facts that can be submitted to mathematical analysis have been collected.

Mr. G. N. M. Tyrell constructed an apparatus consisting of five boxes each of which contained a small electric bulb that could be lighted by pressing one of five keys. The "subject" being tested had to try to open the box in which the lamp was alight. To avoid telepathic leakage from the mind of the operator as to which key had been pressed, they were connected to a mechanical selector consisting of an arm passing over five metal contacts. The arm rotated in a closed box. When a key was pressed the arm stopped and lit whichever lamp was connected with the stud it was in contact with at the moment. To this was added a mechanical recorder. Every time a box was opened a corresponding mark was made on a travelling strip of paper. If the box contained a lighted lamp a second mark was made beside the first. As a precaution against light leakage or the perception of heat from the box a delaying device was used. The selector picked out a lamp to be lit, but it did not light unless and until that box was opened. When this happened the mark recording the opening of the box began a little before that recording the lighting of the lamp. With this apparatus over 10,000 experiments were made. The odds against the results being due to chance varied from 10,000 to

one to billions to one—the latter with one specially successful percipient. With this lady it was found that when she did not know the “delay action” device had been switched on its use made no difference to her score. She found no more difficulty in guessing which lamp was about to light, than in guessing which was actually alight.

Another series of experiments was devised by Mr. W. Whately Carington. A series of drawings was hung up in his study in Cambridge, one drawing each evening at a predetermined time. At the same hour a number of friends co-operating in the experiments made drawings of anything that came into their heads. The results were submitted to mathematical analysis to compare them with what might have been expected if chance alone had been at work. It was found that the number of “hits” far exceeded chance expectation. But it was also noticed that the number of “hits” made on the drawing exhibited the day before, and on that to be exhibited the day after were also in excess of chance expectation. Hits on a drawing exhibited a night or two before could be explained as a delayed emergence of an impression made at the time on the subconscious. But the knowledge of what was going to happen a day or two later raised very difficult philosophical problems. (S.P.R. XLVI and XLVII).

Mr. S. G. Soal, meanwhile, had been carrying on card guessing experiments for some five years with results that were little, if at all, above chance expectation. Mr. Carington suggested that he should examine his records to see whether there had been successes in guessing the card before, or the card after, the one actually guessed at. It was found that this was the case, and that the number of “hits” was far in excess of chance expectation. (S.P.R. XLVI).

We have thus three independent groups of experiments, each of which shows the existence of precognition. Those who are interested may refer to the lengthy accounts of the precautions taken and of the mathematical methods employed.

The recognition of precognition has complicated the technique of psychical research in other ways. At one time it was thought that if the experimenter did not know *at the time* whether the guesses of the percipient were right or wrong telepathy was ruled out as the source of the percipient's knowledge. But it is now necessary to insure that the experimenter shall not know the correct answers either before, during, or after the experiments,

to rule out the operation of precognitive or retrocognitive telepathy. A very neat little apparatus has been devised by Mr. Denys Parsons to meet these conditions. It has a vertical chimney that will hold 200 coloured counters—like the sweets in a penny-in-the-slot machine. At the bottom are compartments corresponding to the colours of the counters, and a lever which will sort the bottom counter into any one of the compartments at will. The counters are thoroughly mixed without being seen, and, still unseen are fed into the chimney. The percipient then sorts them into what he guesses are the proper compartments by means of the lever—of course without seeing them. Afterwards the number of red counters in the red drawer and so forth are counted. In this way the total number of correct and incorrect guesses is known, but the success or failure of each individual guess is not known at any time. At the time of the report 24,000 trials had been made, but the results did not show any significant difference from chance expectation. Other experiments have been devised but the results have not yet been published.

These developments suggest that some of the experiments designed to differentiate between telepathy and clairvoyance were defective, but the existence of extra sensory perception (usually abbreviated to ESP) may be regarded as established.

The evidence for it being now so strong many think all future research should aim at throwing light on its nature, and the factors affecting its operation. Mr. Whateley Carington in his *Telepathy* (Methuen 1945) after detailing experiments that are a model of scientific method, works out a very comprehensive theoretical explanation of telepathy and related phenomena. Basically he seeks to extend the theory of the association of ideas—even to hauntings !

A case reported recently by Dr. F. von Neureiter, Professor of Forensic Medicine at Riga, may shed fresh light on Telepathy. (S.P.R. XLVI. H. Ehrenwald M.D. *Psychopathological Aspects of Telepathy*). A young girl diagnosed as suffering from "developmental aphasia of agrammatical type" was found to repeat words and phrases silently thought of by her mother and others. It is, of course, *possible* that the disease and the paranormal phenomena are unconnected ; but if, as is probable, they are related, are both due to a common cause, or is one caused by the other ? An attempt should be made to discover whether other sufferers from the disease have similar powers.

So great is the interest aroused by the philosophic implications of precognition that Professors C. D. Broad and H. H. Price contributed a Symposium at a Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association in 1937. Dr. Broad suggested that there might possibly be two dimensions of time. Mr. J. W. Dunne's theories have not been very well received by philosophers. Mr. H. F. Saltmarsh has argued that as the present moment is not a knife edge for experience, but extends over a small period of time, it may be that in our subconscious the "present" has a larger spread; so that an event which is future to the conscious mind might be present to the subconscious. There are two difficulties: having knowledge of an event which has not happened and therefore does not exist, and the absence of any causal chain between the event and the perceiving mind. I think a theory put forward by Mr. C. A. Richardson in his *Happiness Freedom and God* may help. His argument is stated at length in mathematical form, but roughly he suggests that future events are really probabilities. As they come nearer to the observer some of them become more probable. Some have a probability that falls short of actuality by an infinitesimal quantity. Then there may be a jump of the kind dealt with in Quantum theory and the probability becomes a fact. The paths of other event-probabilities do not pass through the position of the observer, and so do not "happen". This may help us to understand precognitive dreams where the dream modifies the event. In a case reported by F. Myers a lady dreamed of her coachman falling on to his head in the road. In the event the lady realized what was about to happen and called to someone to catch the coachman as he swayed and fell. (*Science and Psychological Phenomena* by G. N. M. Tyrrell p. 48).

In my paper on Telepathy read before the Institute in March, 1924, I suggested that minds of persons exist in some sense apart from space, so that minds a long distance apart in space might nevertheless be in "contact" with each other. If minds exist apart from the space co-ordinates of the space-time-continuum we should expect that they also exist apart from the time co-ordinate. Suppose a mind perceives a point-event in the continuum by some means other than those which ordinarily link us all so closely to the continuum (I mean the mechanism, whatever it is, of ESP) the location of the event on the time co-ordinate might be perceived with some dimness.

It might be difficult to tell whether the event was past present or future. This fits the results of statistical experiments, but precognitive dreams or prophetic declarations might be due to special factors which we are not at present in a position to explore.

The many things which we have looked at so far form part of the background against which we must consider the evidence for human survival. Our senses enable us to function in a world of space and time. Now we are faced by rigidly scientific evidence that there is a realm beyond or apart from the phenomena to which we are accustomed. We are like fishes out of water. This is so disconcerting that many scientists cannot bring themselves to investigate the data which have been so laboriously accumulated. But it is not only the philosophy of science which has been disturbed. At one time we thought we knew what the question "Does man survive death" meant. But the word "survive" is a time term. It implies a before and after position on the time co-ordinate. If man exists apart from the time co-ordinate can the term "survive" be fundamentally applicable to him?

With these things in mind let us turn to the phenomena cited as evidence for "survival."

In "Book Tests" a communicator at a seance will tell the sitter to go home and pick out a certain book on a certain shelf, when a message will be found on a certain page. But the nature of the "message" is often not very precise, and there is uncertainty as to the number of the page, for some books have introductory pages which may or may not be counted. Still a comparison with a series of dummy tests does suggest the presence of supernormal knowledge. But why suppose it is obtained through non-incarnate minds? Why should such minds be better able to cognize the passage in the book than incarnate minds?

"Cross Correspondences" offer much stronger evidence. It was mentioned earlier that matter written automatically sometimes purported to give messages from other minds--usually non-incarnate minds. In the "Cross Correspondence" scripts the communicators claim to be a group of classical scholars. They profess to collaborate in producing a series of literary allusions in the script of a group of automatists. The allusions are obscure, and imply a very extensive knowledge of Greek and Latin literature. To put the pieces of the puzzles together requires an erudite interpreter. It is said that only

those who knew the communicators in life can fully appreciate some of the points. To the layman there seems to be much room for the subjective element. As in the case of the Book Tests a control experiment has been carried out, and it is reported that the results differed widely from the actual phenomena. Numerical assessment of the results is almost impossible, but those who have made the closest study of the scripts (and particularly those who knew the "communicators") are the most impressed by them.

The procedure at ordinary mediumistic "sittings" is fairly well known. The medium first goes into a trance which may vary from a slight dreaminess resembling light hypnosis, to an almost complete loss of ordinary consciousness. Both states seem to have much in common with hypnosis and sleep. The medium then shows symptoms like those of multiple personality, except that the personalities claim to be deceased persons. One personality usually calls itself the medium's "control" and acts as a "master of ceremonies." A very elaborate attempt has recently been made by Mr. Whately Carington to determine the nature of these personalities by qualitative methods, using Free Association Tests. It is held that the pattern of reaction times and response words forms a kind of psychological "finger-print." The tests were given to a medium, her control, and some communicators. After prolonged discussion of the results it was agreed that nothing had been established—except possibly that in this particular case the control was part of the medium. (S.P.R. XLII, XLIII, XLIV).

Communicators often make statements about facts which, it is supposed, would be known only to them. An attempt has recently been made to estimate the part chance might play in the statements being correct, and it was found that the odds were enormously against chance as the explanation. (S.P.R. XXIX). This establishes supernormal knowledge, but not that that knowledge came from deceased persons. It is almost impossible to give strict proof of such origin, since anything that was known to the deceased when alive may have leaked into the subconscious minds of others then alive and living at the time of the sitting. Or there might be retrocognitive telepathy between the mind of the medium (or a sitter) and the mind of the communicator before his death.

But while ESP by the living cannot be ruled out, its operation becomes a very complicated matter. We have to suppose

an enormous mass of information concerning hundreds of people reaching the subconscious mind of the medium, and becoming available when required. The Law of the Parsimony of Causes requires us to seek for the explanation that makes the fewest assumptions. In an age dominated by mechanistic materialism the theory of personal survival of death seemed very improbable. But now we find we know so little of the nature of man, of the external world (if it exists) and of the relation of the one to the other, that dogmatism as to the effect of death seems out of place. Unfortunately we often have to use the terms "probable" and "improbable" in this connection without assigning any numerical value to them, and the probabilities are rarely assessed upon the immediate data. Most people approach our subject from the standpoint of some philosophic or theological school: an ordered system of data and inferences. Suppose, for example, that a person held that we are surrounded by demons constantly intervening in our affairs. Such a person would think a theory that many of the things mentioned in this paper were the work of demons. That is a perfectly reasonable and proper attitude provided it is recognized that the probability springs from the person's general beliefs, *and not from the particular facts we have under review.*

Nothing has so far been said about what are called "Physical Phenomena." Here, unfortunately, research has been very difficult because of the amount of fraud that is met with. One example of the best kind of work may be mentioned. The experiments were carried out by Dr. Osty and his brother with the medium Rudi Schneider. An infra red beam was arranged to play on a light cell in the circuit of a galvanometer, the movements of which were recorded on a moving strip of paper on which the medium's breathing and a time base were also recorded. It was found that the intensity of the ray varied rhythmically with the medium's breathing.

The view that matter can be acted upon in some way at present unknown has recently been supported by some statistical experiments that can be submitted to mathematical analysis. In 1943 the *American Journal of Parapsychology* began to publish a series of experiments in which it was "willed" that randomly thrown dice should come to rest with a certain face uppermost. This effect is said to be due to psycho-kinesis (abbreviated to PK). These experiments are reviewed, and some English

experiments described in Part 170 of Vol. XLVII of the Proceedings of the S.P.R. This is a small Part. It is published at 2s., and any who are unfamiliar with the Proceedings might care to purchase it. Dr. R. H. Thouless considers that the reality of the effect has been abundantly proved by the American experiments. Experiments in this country have not yielded very clear results.

I hope this Paper may have given some readers a rough idea of what Psychical Research is all about : but I hope I have also made them realize that no reliable judgments can be formed on the subject without a careful study of the evidence. There is no substitute for a knowledge of the Proceedings of the S.P.R., which can be consulted in most of the larger Public Libraries ; but I would recommend the beginner to read *Science and Psychical Phenomena* by G. N. M. Tyrrell (Methuen) 1938.

DISCUSSION.

The Chairman (the Rev. J. STAFFORD WRIGHT) after thanking Mr. P. O. Ruoff for his reading of Mr. Leslie's paper, said : We are most grateful to Mr. Leslie for the way in which he has compressed such a wide range of facts into the limited space at his disposal. He appears to have covered the whole field, with the exception of what is commonly called Psychometry. In Psychometry the sensitive takes an object, and from contact with it can discover facts about the past, present, and future of its owner, or of others who have had any special contact with it. Dr. Osty did some practical work in this branch of Psychical Research, and in the last few years Dr. J. Hettinger has given the results of experiments in two books, "The Ultra-Perceptive Faculty," and "Exploring the Ultra-Perceptive Faculty" (Rider).

Since Psychical Research has now established itself as a branch of science, it is important that some Christians should be in touch with the work that is being done. Apart from the further nail that it has driven in the coffin of Materialism, its investigations into precognition have an important bearing on predictive prophecy in the Bible. It is, for example, no longer possible on scientific grounds to deny the possibility of such things as the naming of Josiah or of Cyrus centuries before their birth.

I should like to comment on the closing paragraphs of Mr. Leslie's paper. In approaching the question of the identity of the alleged

communicators at seances and elsewhere, the Christian, who accepts the Bible as God's revelation, is bound to have a certain bias, in view of the emphatic Biblical condemnation of spiritualism. But, even apart from the Bible, Psychological Research suggests that many of the messages need not be taken at their face value, Mr. Leslie (at the bottom of page 193) feels that the theory of E.S.P. by the living is a very complicated matter. This is not necessarily so, if, as appears likely, communion is possible between mind and mind at the subconscious level.

Let us suppose that A visits a medium, or clairvoyant, M. Their contact establishes a link between the two at the subconscious level, and at this level some at least of A's thoughts and experiences are drawn into M's subconsciousness, and from there emerge into M's consciousness as thoughts or words. M differs from most of us in the capacity to draw up into consciousness a part at least of what is in the subconsciousness of another. A, B and C, without this gift, are likewise linked in their subconsciousness, though they do not realise it. Each person may be thus likened to a telephone exchange, with fresh lines being added continually, though reason and experiment would suggest that normally only those lines with which we have some special associations become effective.

When A goes to M, M is not only linked to A, but through A's "exchange" may be connected up with another "subscriber," B or C, and thus perceive something of him. Suppose, however, that B has died. His "line" at A's "exchange" does not go dead, though it does not follow that the discarnate B is at the end of it now. A characteristic of this subconscious level is, as Mr. Leslie has shown, that the normal time sequence, with its rigid distinction of past, present, and future, is not operative. It is thus likely that, even after B's death, M can still make contact with B's "line" through A, as though B were still alive. Here the telephone analogy breaks down. Reception at M's end is never more than partial; no clairvoyant or medium is infallible. M must always express as best he can what seems to him to be coming through. If M knows, or believes, that B is dead, the messages will clothe themselves in M's mind in a form suitable for a person "on the other side." The source is the living B via the link A, but the form is an alleged message from the dead B in the clothing given to it by M's mind.

It is worth quoting from the autobiography of one of the most introspective mediums, Mrs. Eileen Garrett. On page 168 of "My Life as a Search for the Meaning of Mediumship," she says, "In examining my own process of clairvoyance, I have become aware that I draw the knowledge which helps me build the images of the dead relatives and friends of those who need help, from the subconscious minds of the sitters." And again on page 185, "I began to wonder whether the whole structure of mediumship might not depend on a form of telepathy, and whether the medium does not draw information for communications from the subconscious mind of the sitter."

Cross Correspondences, mentioned by Mr. Leslie on page 193, are, I think, the hardest to explain on these lines, but I believe that, in cases where demonic interference is ruled out, it is along these lines that the true explanation will ultimately be found. The theory accounts for much that is puzzling in spiritualistic and clairvoyant communications.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

Mr. G. N. M. TYRRELL wrote: Thank you for your interesting paper. I find my own attitude on the theory of precognition is rather that of rejecting *all* theories and having nothing to put in their place!

I have not read Mr. C. A. Richardson's book, but I must confess that I find it difficult to believe that cases of precognition are to be explained as subtle estimates of probability. By "probability" we mean inference based on knowledge of present facts, and I cannot convince myself that inference has anything to do with precognition. There is also the difficulty that some of the precognitions go into minute detail, and this detail is the result of human choice. I cannot quite imagine what sort of data the precognising subject must get hold of to enable him to infer that A will slip on a banana skin in Alpha Street when he could better have reached his destination by going along Beta Street.

One thing I am suspicious of is the assumption people readily make that the subject precognises an event *in* the space-time world, *directly* by a sort of time projected act of perception. This is on a par with the assumption that telepathy is a direct acquisition of someone else's conscious thought, again by a means analogous to sense-perception. You rather suggest this in the sentence beginning "Suppose a mind perceives a point-event . . ." on page 191 of your paper.

The statistical type of experiment does suggest this ; but I think that all these experiments are a dangerous guide to *theory*. All the rest of the evidence points clearly, to my mind, to E.S.P. as not being at all analogous to sense-perception but as being one case of the emergence of material from the "unconscious" or subliminal region of the self. In this subliminal region I suspect that contact is made with the space-time event in the future, or in the case of telepathy, with the conscious thought in the agent's mind. The source of all the information is in something which lies *behind* the space-time-world events.

That, it seems to me, is the point of view which the evidence supports, and the one which we should have in mind when we plan experiments or devise theories.

This, I am afraid, is not a very helpful comment. But then my own opinion is that we shall never understand precognition by means of our existing stock of ideas. We need conceptions which are at present foreign to us. That is why I doubt the competence of mathematical theories to deal with the subject.

Dr. R. H. THOULESS wrote : I have read your paper with interest. The view about future events as being mere probabilities before they happen is the view I hold myself which I have often expressed verbally but never (I think) in writing. . . . I think it gets over some but not all of the difficulties of precognition (which I am convinced does take place).

Dr. S. G. SOAL wrote : I have not yet read C. A. Richardson's book, but for myself I find such a theory very difficult to apply to the supposed phenomena of precognition. Surely there are an infinite number of *possible* futures and of these a large number would possess about equal probabilities of being realised. How is the clairvoyant able to pick out the one that actually happens out of such a large number ?

If one draws a red counter out of a box containing equal numbers of counters of five colours, how has the future event of drawing a red counter a larger probability than that of drawing a yellow counter ?

If visual clues are not possible I can't think there is any greater probability. Yet this is the kind of thing the clairvoyant does.

With regard to Von Neureiter's case, have you read Hans Bender's very important article in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, March,

1938 ? It seems practically certain that the case was one of auditory hyperesthesia. The mother in giving encouragement vocalised the next word. This was detected again and again by the phonetic experts of the Commission, when the girl was isolated from the possibility of picking up these whispers and vocalisations the phenomena did not occur.

Professor H. H. PRICE wrote : Precognition is one of the most difficult subjects I know ! The idea that precognition is to be explained by means of the notion of Probability is obviously an attractive one. But the question is What *sort* of probability ? (The word "probability" clearly covers several rather different meanings, *e.g.*, in one sense of the word, all probabilities are by definition measured by fractions, in another they are not. The Laplacian concept of probability is different from the one expounded by writers on the Frequency Theory, etc.). I think that what you say is plausible so long as one is using the word "probability" in an ordinary common-sensical way, not susceptible of exact measurement, as when one speaks of the probability that the train will be late, or that it will rain before sunset to-day. It is this same (non-measurable) notion of probability which lies at the basis of such conceptions as "a danger" or "an opportunity," likewise as such conceptions as "easy" and "difficult" (it is possible that you will fail unless you make a good effort). Now I think that we may conceive of probabilities of *this* sort as being somehow inherent in objective facts and situations ; and we may suppose that some minds have the power of becoming aware of such probabilities precognitively—*e.g.*, of precognizing that such and such a future event will involve or contain a danger of a particular sort for Mr. A, say, a danger of his being struck by lightning, or again an opportunity for him to meet Mr. B.

I think a further step is now required. Precognition, whatever it is, seems to be a function of "the unconscious." Now it looks as if unconscious mental processes make use of a symbolism of *mental images*—which may or may not be translated into verbal symbolism at the conscious level. And a symbolism of mental images (a pictorial as opposed to verbal forms of representation) has one very peculiar feature. The distinction between past, present and future cannot be drawn in it ; if an event is pictorially represented it must

be represented as *present*. More important still, what logicians call "modal" distinctions—those between actual, possible, necessary and probable—cannot be represented in pictorial symbolism either. If something is to be represented in such a symbolism at all, it must be represented as *actually existing*. (Cf. a railway poster of a health resort. The sunshine, blue sky, etc., are in fact only probable, and not very highly probable either; but the poster has to represent them as actual—thereby misleading the simple-minded traveller.)

It follows that if "precognita" are in fact only probabilities then—dangers, opportunities, etc., they will none the less be represented as actual "cast-iron" happenings owing to the nature of the symbolism which the precognising part of our mind employs. (Also, the precognising subject will not be able to distinguish past, present and future—which perhaps accounts for the queer remarks of mediumistic people about the "unreality of time.")

I think it is necessary to add this further point about the necessary limitations of image symbolisms, if the Probability Theory of precognition is to be made as plausible as it can be made. Whether, even so, it will really work, I am not by any means sure. And (to come back at last to your paragraph) will it even begin to work if we start from the *Physicist's* notion of probability, which (a) is a *frequency* notion—in talking about probabilities he is roughly talking about "averages"—(b) is applied primarily to *microphysical* occurrences, whereas precognition is concerned entirely with *macroscopical* ones (e.g., the fall of a coachman from his seat). And if it should turn out that the microphysical happenings which physicists talk of are somehow "logical constructions" out of large scale macroscopical observables (as Idealists and Phenomenalists think)—then where are we? At any rate, the whole epistemological problem of the reality or the "status" of microphysical entities is on our hands. Whatever the right solution of it is (for myself, I prefer a more Realistic one; but the difficulties of it are very great, and some of the Physicists themselves would not agree with me) I ought to say, however, that I have not read Mr. Richardson's book; perhaps he clears these matters up.

I hope you will not think it impertinent if I say that the Address as a whole seems to me an admirably clear and balanced outline of the field of Psychological Research.

Professor C. D. BROAD wrote: I have not read Richardson's book, and I must confess that I do not understand his theory as summarized on p. 191. As it stands it seems to be self-contradictory. First we have the statement "future events are . . . probabilities." Then it is said: "As events come nearer to the observer some of them become more probable." If we combine the first statement with the second, we get, "As probabilities come nearer to the observer some of them become more probable." I cannot make sense of this. What is meant by a *probability* coming nearer to an observer? And what is meant by a probability becoming more probable?

I should have thought that what is probable is always a proposition, *e.g.*, the proposition that it will be raining tomorrow. And I should have thought that the probability of any proposition was always a relative to some other proposition or set of propositions, *e.g.* "relative to the fact a proposition that the glass has been falling rapidly this evening it is highly probable that it will be raining at noon tomorrow," but by tomorrow morning at 9.0 a.m. the glass may have risen again, and relative to *that* fact it may be highly *improbable* that it will be raining at noon tomorrow. Perhaps Richardson means only that in some cases a person may successively become aware of a series of data such that the probability of a certain kind of event happening at a certain time in the future is greater and greater with regard to each of these successive data.

There is one other small point. I note that at the bottom of p. 190 you describe Neureiter's case as "recently reported." This is hardly correct. Neureiter's pamphlet appeared in 1935, so the case must be earlier than that date. I do not know whether he was a careful and trustworthy person.

Mr. C. A. RICHARDSON wrote to say: That, in the outline of his theory on p. 191, it should have been said that all future events become more probable as they approach the observer—not merely some of them and that the phrase "an infinitesimal quantity" should read "a finite but very small quantity." Apart from this he thought the general idea had been conveyed as accurately as was possible in so small a space.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I thank the Chairman for his kind remarks. I left out Psychometry because I was not satisfied that telepathy was excluded from

the experiments. I still think it possible to push E.S.P. explanations of "communications" to a point where one feels that any explanation is being thought to be preferable to the hypothesis of communication from the dead. It may be that Mr. Wright thinks the Bible teaches that the dead cannot communicate with the living, and that, therefore, "communications" must come from non-human sources. I do not think the Bible so teaches, but I felt I ought not to limit my arguments to those who accept its authority.

I am deeply indebted to the distinguished writers who have been kind enough to reply to my request for help on the subject of precognition—particularly to the late Prof. Price who wrote when seriously ill. I thank Dr. Soal for calling attention to the doubtful character of the von Neuriter case. I had no idea that the S.P.R. would publish a case with no indication that it was under grave suspicion. My faith in the Society's Proceedings has received a shock.

In spite of the great interest inevitably attaching to "survival," I feel very strongly that far more important are the indications that reality is deeply and fundamentally different from what we have supposed it to be. Our minds are so adapted to living that we can hardly form any conception of the reality in which we live and move and have our being.

Since the Paper was read, G. N. M. Tyrrell's *Personality of Man* has been published as a Pelican Book. *The Experimental Situation in Psychical Research*, by Dr. S. G. Soal (F. W. H. Myers' Lecture, 1947, S.P.R.), should be read.