

APPENDIX

THE PARAPSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION A NEW BRANCH OF INQUIRY

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Introduction

The purpose in these pages is to introduce a new branch of study, the Parapsychology of Religion. While the project is a novel one, it follows an old pattern, essentially paralleling such branches as the Psychology, the Sociology, and the Philosophy of Religion.

The aim is to bring to the problems of the larger discipline of religion whatever is applicable of the methods and principles of parapsychology. As seen from another point of view this new branch opens up to parapsychology a wide range of human experiences and practices in religion that have always been assumed to depend on powers of communication now identified as essentially parapsychical. Thus the Parapsychology of Religion will naturally have to be a branch both of parapsychology and of religion at the same time.

From the viewpoint of religion this step would seem to be particularly timely today. For a number of centuries the religions of mankind have been progressively losing authority as a result of the advancement of knowledge which has logically clashed with existing theologies. It will be widely agreed that the situation of religion today, especially in the western world, is a critical one; as a result of this crisis the reaction of the reflective religious man to this proposed course can be expected to be more receptive than it would have been a generation ago.

From the point of view of parapsychology too there is likely to be some tolerance for this proposal that would not have been felt in earlier decades. Parapsychology, even after a hundred years of more or less

continuous research, has not found a market; it is still entirely dependent for its support upon philanthropy. If therefore it should prove that parapsychology can, on its own scientific level, be applied to any of the problems and needs of religion, the prospect of such usefulness would be welcomed by many parapsychologists whether or not they are especially interested in religion.

Historical Setting

The move to bring new scholarly procedures to an evaluative study of the field of the religions has historic precedent. Other major fields of practice on which men have depended have at some time reached a point at which a revolutionary change took place, and this generally introduced a more reliable stage. Thus the emergence of chemistry transformed agriculture. Physics revolutionized engineering. Bacteriology marked a new era for medicine. These are examples from a lengthy list. Religion itself has long been waiting, unable by itself to open its official doors to the objective testing of its claims; but now its time for help in transformation may well be drawing near.

It may seem strange that a thorough scientific study of religious experiences and miraculous effects did not naturally develop long ago. As a matter of fact the first general theories of parapsychical phenomena were religious in character. And even after naturalistic theories of these mysteries developed (as Mesmer's concept of animal magnetism did in the late 18th century) strong efforts were made to introduce evidence to support certain of the claims of religion. The Spiritualist movement was one such case, with its attempt to prove the doctrine of immortality by way of what was believed to be communication with the dead through mediums. The effort at making a practice of religious healing, as in the case of Christian Science, was another attempt at the practical demonstration of a religious doctrine.

But while all these movements were failures so far as getting official science and orthodox religion together was concerned, the attempts to get confirmatory empirical evidence of certain religious claims did lead to some serious scientific study in the form of the psychical research movement in the late 19th century. That attempt was in fact the beginning of parapsychology, although in due course this more scientific branch had, in order to follow a scholarly path, to withdraw from the very Spiritualist associations that had helped to generate it. Nonetheless an unmistakably religious problem had started it. Moreover, a strong, almost universal, interest in the possible demonstration of spirit survival continued to be the main source of support for parapsychology, extending on past the middle of the present century.

This interest persists even though the claims of mediumship (i.e. of making contact with discarnate personalities) have never reached the point of justifiable scientific decision. Had the issue been an easy one to decide, and had the decision been favorable, the 19th century itself would doubtless have seen the establishment of a Parapsychology of Religion. In that event a revolution within the discipline of religion would already have occurred.

However, no orthodox religious institution has so far taken official notice of parapsychology; in this it is even behind the sciences. For that matter the parapsychologists have certainly not been looking for admission to the divinity school either.

Thus although Parapsychology and Religion are in some basic respects closely related, a considerable gap of mutual indifference has separated these fields. Against this background then the prospects for the new branch of inquiry must be appraised with caution; it may for a time be more needed than welcomed.

Definition of Approach

Parapsychology itself is the study of the interaction between a person and his environment by other than sensory and muscular means. Packaged in two words it is "extrasensorimotor communication." The term "parapsychical" (in looser usage, psychic, psychical, paranormal, supernormal) matches the word "parapsychology," but it is now common practice to use the Greek letter *psi* to identify this combination of parapsychical elements, both the extrasensory and the extramotor aspects; that is, *psi* includes extrasensory perception and psychokinesis.

The Parapsychology of Religion thus consists of that range of the religious domain that depends upon the extrasensorimotor or *psi* type of exchange. It does not matter at this stage that this "range of the religious domain" has not as yet been investigated by scientific method. That is exactly what this new branch will undertake to do, and it will need to be just as careful in every step as it has been at its best in the past. Far from conceding any privileged status to the claims of religion, this exploration will hold sternly to the standards and precautions that have kept it on its own difficult course hitherto. The more important the question the greater the need of good controls.

It is quite true that there are many ways by which men believe they arrive at the truth; but the way that has proved to be by far the most reliable is the way of experimental science. This is however not to exaggerate the role of scientific inquiry in this sensitive and vital area. It is merely to bring a simple and useful way of making sure into an

area where to be more assured and knowledgeable can advance the proper and justifiable goals of the discipline.

An Example

While the Parapsychology of Religion is a new branch of study there have already been advances made in parapsychology that have bearing on this area of problems. They have not however been accomplished by deliberate design to deal with the question in religion on which they bear.

The first example of these advances is a familiar one; it is the shield parapsychology has developed against one of religion's opponents, the physicalistic theory of man. It is general knowledge that the main destructive influence on religion over the last 400 years has been the advance of what is called philosophical materialism or the view that man's nature is wholly physical. This philosophy contradicts the general assumption of the religious systems that there is in man something that is spiritual—something that is beyond physical explanation. The findings of parapsychology are reasonably interpreted as refuting the materialistic view.

The experimental evidence that psi is nonphysical consists of several types; of these the most easily appreciated is the result of researches on precognition. In this work it has been found that under certain conditions subjects can predict the order of random events ahead of time, whether an hour ahead, a week, or a month, and even a year. These tests made it clear that the psi process is not limited by time, and still other researches have shown that psi is independent of certain other physical conditions as well. No physical condition has thus far been reliably shown to be linked in a causal relation with the psi test results.

The finding of parapsychology, therefore, that psi capacity is not subject to physical limitations, confirms the religious side of the issue, the doctrine that man is something more than a mechanistic system. This discovery has a far-reaching bearing for religion, partly because the issue involved has been an almost crucial one for the religious viewpoint, and partly because it is a scientifically confirmed experimental fact. It thus introduces a new turn of the road for the relation between religion and science. Even though the implications have not yet registered on either the sciences or the religions, the importance of the finding is enough to justify whatever "incubation period" may be needed for their acceptance. It is enough for the present to say that parapsychology has in a real sense confirmed the spiritual (i.e. extra-physical) nature of man.

Religion and the Types of Psi

The research in parapsychology however has apparently confirmed much more than the doctrine of an extraphysical quality in man's nature. In the next three sections this generalization will be developed, one step at a time, and it will reappear repeatedly throughout the paper.

However a different type of discovery has been made that belongs specifically to the new branch itself, one that came as a result of the research for the role of psi in religion. A pattern of relationships has been found that is surprising and impressive. In the first place, it is evident on inspection that the special types of psi are much the same as the familiar kinds of contact assumed by the religionist to occur between man and the divine order in which he believes. For example, the two most general principles of psi exchange, extrasensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK), are both involved in religious doctrine. From the viewpoint of divinity all the communication received otherwise than through the sense organs would of course be extrasensory; and any mental influence exerted on the environment without muscular means would be by definition psychokinetic. Exalt these powers after the manner which the inspired religionist would use in his conception of a divine being and the result would be "omniscience" as an unlimited power of perception and "omnipotence" as psychokinetic influence with an unrestricted range. These general types of psi were thus projected as the attributes of deity in theological doctrine.

The concepts of omniscience and omnipotence have somewhat varying connotations with different cultures and times, but they are fundamental to all religions that assume transcendent powers of exchange between man and divinity. The "all-seeing eye" of the divine being is equivalent to a supreme order of clairvoyance; knowledge of things to come is precognition; the searching awareness of what is in the hearts of men is telepathy, and the wondrous physical miracles that adorn the legendry of the faiths of mankind would generally conform to the concept of psychokinesis in parapsychology today. These usages seem to differ little in principle, if indeed at all, from the specific natural abilities that have now been discovered in psi research. For the present at least the comparison is close enough to invite thorough study. Even from the point of view of parapsychology alone this parallel has the importance that original practices naturally have for the science that eventually follows, practices that assumed what later had to be proved.

When we turn next to the other viewpoint to see how man is believed to communicate with deity the parallel continues quite as closely.

Prophecy is the equivalent of precognition. Prayer may be generally assumed to use the communication principle of telepathy, with a two-way transference of thought allowable. Revelation (with seership, etc.) would require either telepathy or clairvoyance, depending on the source assumed, whether personal or not. In general, then, it seems that for either deity or devotee there is much the same principle of psi exchange in transcendent religious experience. These natural parapsychical powers of man are almost literally a duplicate pattern of the communication system of general religion, insofar as incoming exchange is concerned.

Although on the side of psychokinesis the research in parapsychology is not so far advanced as in ESP, the results thus far suggest a parallel with theological doctrine of much the same order as the ESP results have shown. The PK effect on moving inanimate targets (dice, balls, coins, etc.) has been demonstrated experimentally to a sufficient extent that a conclusion can safely be drawn, and more recently a number of researches have rather strongly indicated a PK effect (e.g. of healing or accelerated growth) upon living organisms as well. It is not yet experimentally demonstrated that PK can be applied successfully by human influence upon static inanimate objects, although the collection of spontaneous case reports suggest that it does at times occur.

On the side of religion the physical miracles include all the three types of physical conditions (moving, living, and static matter) with which the PK research itself is concerned. Again, as these religious phenomena are reported, they are much more impressive in magnitude than laboratory PK results, but at the moment we are only comparing the qualitative types of psi effect. In any case, there is no adequate way to verify the reports of the miraculous physical happenings as has been done on the side of the psi investigations.

Thus, on the whole, the types of psi that have been quite independently outlined by laboratory research closely resemble the kinds of exchange that religious men have assumed in the theologies that arose out of human experience long before the laboratories of parapsychology began their work.

But the parallel between religious experiences and the phenomena of parapsychology takes on other dimensions as well. For example, after long years of study the types of psi now appear to be mere aspects (phenomena) of an underlying unitary psi process within the individual human personality that functions independently of physical limitations. In a similar way the religionist throughout all the various types of manifestation combines all these various aspects of interaction in one common concept of a divine being. This doctrine at once personalizes

and unifies the diversified modes of exchange between two worlds. Thus it came to be realized that the investment of deity with a reach and grasp of power transcending space, time, and matter removed all physical carriers to the divine presence believed to be everywhere. So a concept of omnipresent divinity was created out of a zone of human experience that has since taken ages of study to confirm as present in man's own nature.

The Forms of Psi Reflected in Religious Experience

Still more precisely parallel than the foregoing however, are the phenomena of parapsychology to those of religious communication when we look into the *forms* the experience takes. The study of spontaneous psi phenomena has brought out four general forms of manifestation in which psi more commonly occurs: *dreams, hallucinations, intuitions, and physical effects.* (Some minor forms are omitted.) These are the very same forms that, down through the ages of the history of the religions, have been the media through which men have believed they were in communication with the divine order.

In the case collections of parapsychology the most common form of spontaneous psi experience is the dream. In the religious case material of some cultures hallucinations may outnumber dreams as vehicles of divine messages (the signs in the heavens, the apparitions of angels, or the voice of God.) Intuition is less spectacular, more easily overlooked, and less likely to be related and recorded, but it too has played its part in revelation and prophecy, as it has of course in spontaneous ESP. The physical miracles conveying divine messages by implication are just as in the case of psi experiences, much less frequent although much more spectacular and impressive—at least as they have come down to us through long periods of time and through many versions.

Conditions of Psi Experience

The comparison can be further continued as we look next into the mental states that favor the occurrence of psi experience. On the side of parapsychology, it is known that certain states of limited consciousness seem to favor the spontaneous occurrence of ESP experiences. Most familiar of these are relaxation, sleep, trance, and other more or less dissociated conditions. However, this problem-area of relevant mental states has not as yet been well studied and only tentative generalizations can be made now.

Even so, certain comparable effects of special mental conditions on religious experience might be mentioned. This relationship is implied

in some of the types of preparation of the priest, the prophet, or oracle for the exercise of contact with divinity. Even within a wide range of variations there are certain common features tending to aid deep concentration to increase receptivity and to exclude the distractions of the immediate environment. From the oracles of ancient Greece to the Buddhist priests of modern Tibet the conditions for intensive communication with divine beings bear elements of general resemblance to those regarded as favorable to the occurrence of psi phenomena.

All this has the implication that (as we now know well enough in psi research) such communication is largely not consciously controllable. It is quite evident too from the way the prophets and seers of religious history have acted that they could not just sit down and deliberately evoke their powers at will. The delicate nature of the communication system with which religion has been concerned is rather comparable, not only in the types and forms of its manifestation, but in the mental conditions under which it was expected to function—comparable, that is, to the way psi exchange has thus far been found to take place “in life and lab.”

Here too parapsychology may gain, in comparing the efficiency of various religious practices. Results would be hard to compare, of course, but tentatively promising ideas could be tested, much like a folk belief about a remedy is tried out in medicine. Folklore has already benefited parapsychology as it has some other sciences, but the cross-cultural analysis of religious practices in search of better psi test conditions would be a new and timely research project.

A Common Foundation

Even though the study of these parallels has just begun it already offers a quite unanticipated confirmation. Psi workers of the last 40 years or more, during which these types, forms, and conditions have been mainly worked out, have given little thought to these similarities of exchange in the field of religion. Yet it now appears today that the chart of findings on psi communication fits rather closely into the pattern of interaction assumed in the major religions of mankind. Indeed, no matter what one thinks about the theological claims of these religions, he can now at least see that their founders must have built those great cultural systems on a rather good acquaintance with the same powers that have now been independently established as parapsychical. The fact that certain main outlines of the way psi functions have been experimentally substantiated thousands of years later should be, by any objective standard, a finding of major importance both for religion

and for parapsychology, as well as for the history of human culture. For parapsychology at a minimum it is reassuring to find that the laboratory methods of today could screen basic principles that were taken for granted in human belief and practice so long before the sciences began.

But however much this confirmation gives us to think about, it is more important that it opens the way to further discovery. In any case the point of this comparison is not at all to try to validate the age-old beliefs of exchange between man and his divine order. Likewise it is not in the least necessary to infer that this in some way adds to the conclusive finality of parapsychology. It is enough to say that it justifies and encourages continuance of the new branch of study proposed. It gives those who will work in it assurance that a field of genuine problems exists—a field that can contribute both to religion and to parapsychology.

The Approach to Other Problems of Religion

In turning now to other problem areas of religion we can rightly proceed with a measure of confidence because of the essential similarity that has been found between the psi system and the communication pattern of religious experience. From what has happened in parapsychology it would appear that the underlying assumptions of man's religious interchange have been so essentially parapsychical in character that it would be hard to conceive of religion as having possibly functioned without it. The very authority men attributed to divine beings in general literally *depended* on the miraculous (or super-physical) character of the powers such beings were believed to exercise, capacities that are now identifiable in principle with psi abilities.

This outline of the basic role of psi in religious exchange can serve not only to justify a thorough study of the Parapsychology of Religion but to help to guide the planning of it as well. There remain however even greater problem areas to be explored and this branch of study will largely have to emphasize research for an indefinite period of time. How far the investigations of the future will continue to support claims of religion—how long the parallels will continue to appear as we go on—is not predictable in advance, or the search would not be necessary.

However, in spite of all the confirmation parapsychology has given to religion it is already evident that it will also have a revolutionary impact on that discipline just as it will on all the human institutions that depend on a theory of man's nature. But such shifts have usually been constructive in the long run. One easily anticipates, too, that

other truths of importance to mankind lie deeply embedded in the still unverified religious heritage waiting to be discovered. It has been the history of the older branches of science that the eventual discoveries surpassed to a fantastic extent the original anticipations with which they had been initiated.

In the very nature of religion the principal unverified doctrines deal with some of the greatest questions man can ask, "greatest" because they center on major human needs. Three of these will be examined in an introductory way from the point of view of the Parapsychology of Religion, with the aim of exploring somewhat further what future research may, with some promise, be anticipated.

First, is the question of whether a person can exercise some volitional control over his situation. Is he in any meaningful sense (and in even the slightest verifiable degree) a free moral agent—free, that is, of the substituent deterministic forces operating in and through his organism?

Second, is the problem of man's post-mortem destiny, whether or not death is the end of the personality as an individual agent. *Third*, is the question of the kind of universe it is in which we live. Is it in any verifiable way a *personal universe*, with a type of intelligently purposive agency within it to which man can with rational confidence turn for helpful communication in the midst of the trying emergencies of life?

In examining these great human issues in relation to the Parapsychology of Religion it should not be expected that the new study will have immediate answers of a more than introductory kind at best. For one thing, these are obviously *much more than problems of parapsychology alone*. But it does now seem safe to say with some confidence that this branch can continue to make advances into problem areas of religion where the footprints of no other science have ever been left. It will be seen too that, even on the major problems to be considered next, beginnings have already been made that seem to justify the approach, the emphasis, the method.

However this course of study, the Parapsychology of Religion, will always be limited as a science to its territory of fact finding. The religions of mankind may accept and use the new knowledge or wait until the need is better indicated. In the language of the clinic, the worker in parapsychology is not going to diagnose or prescribe; he seeks the evidence that will make those practices as reliable as possible, knowing all the time that there may be delay in understanding and accepting his evidence when he finally gets it.

Parapsychology and the Conduct of Life

The problem of religion which seems today to have the greatest urgency is that of morality or the ethical control of human conduct.

While man has made impressive advancement in his control over the physical environment and the organic basis of life, his management of his own morality has failed to show comparable progress. As a result many regard this combination of conditions as fast approaching a stage of tragedy.

Since moral conduct has throughout the ages been the principal responsibility of the religions, one readily associates the state of human ethics today with the decline of theological authority throughout the world. As people in various cultures have been finding it increasingly difficult to accept the supernaturalism on which religion's authority has largely rested, the force of its moral influence in the world today has reached a low point. It is true such institutions as schools and governments, which are now largely secularized, have begun to assume independent responsibility for conduct, and the sciences concerned with social behavior have been showing some influence; but these agencies too have been affected by the very same mechanistic trends that have undermined the authority of religion.

Now however parapsychology has reached a point where, in finding acceptable evidence against absolute physicalism in the sciences, it re-opens the case for the role of religion in moral culture. It is now possible to say that whatever one thinks of the particular theology in any given case, religion may actually have done what has been claimed for it in the moral life of men. The basis for this statement is that we now know there are in human nature itself just such powers as the religions have assumed to be operating in the guidance of conduct; these (parapsychical) powers I have already described as assumed in the general concept of transcendental exchange between the human and divine levels of existence.

Psi as a Possible Factor in Conduct

How could such capacities function in the moral guidance of human life? The answer begins with the common religious doctrine that the acceptance of divine influence can give man an enhanced awareness of the right moral decisions in life. The ways and conditions by which such influence is believed to be communicated to the individual have already been mentioned above in the discussion of religious experiences in general. For example, one devoted follower might acknowledge unconscious guidance in the form of an intuitive quickening of conscience, while another might experience the more dramatic auditory hallucination of a timely warning voice. Still another benefit may come in a warning dream that leaves a sense of anticipated guilt or it may be the wide-awake experience of a physical sign that will "deliver from evil."

Thus have men often been led to believe they have been pulled back from the brink of moral crisis much as they have from physical dangers, sometimes in response to prayer and at other times more spontaneously (and probably most often without conscious awareness of the influence).

One recognizes in these types and forms of transcendent ethical experience the same sort of parapsychical occurrences as are the common stock of the psi research field. And it is just this fact of basic similarity, this *identification* of the underlying exchange, that is important today, rather than the particular theory of divine agency assumed. It indicates that a man's belief that he got some help by way of his prayers has a new basis of credibility. Thus parapsychology has, at least to a limited extent, underpinned the belief in a power that man really has and can use in the control of his moral conduct. The mere fact of the existence of such a power of potentially greater awareness marks a forward step. And it is a fact that continues to acquire confirmation.

But this is only half of the picture. Equally important is the believer's faith that he will be given added strength in overcoming evil when he becomes aware of it—increased power to overcome physical as well as mental difficulties that make his battle a moral issue. Here too we can recognize that the same forces that have been verified in the laboratory of parapsychology should (with reasonable generalization) be expected to aid him, not only (as stated) with the extended extrasensory awareness he needs in order to make better ethical judgments, but also the supporting psychokinetic strength to overcome physical obstacles within his own system in making good his escape from temptation.

All this assumes only that psi ability works in a general way as effectively as we have already found it does on specific lines; it is not necessary here to speculate upon the increased control over the process that can logically be expected in time. It is sufficient to build on present knowledge for the present study. The natural psi powers that parapsychology has verified in human beings are in principle adequate to account for the familiar types of moral guidance in which religious men have believed. As I have said, it does not have to be decided at this point from what transcendent sources human appeals for guidance may have been answered. No particular theological assumptions are necessary so far. The point is that the ancient religious belief in a basis of moral reinforcement has actually received enough support from the facts of parapsychology to allow a new approach to the control of human conduct.

Likewise, there is no point in trying *at this stage* to compare the present limited demonstrability of psi capacity with the efficacy expected by the devout believer in his prayers. The experimental psi-test results are generally far from equal to the reported demonstrations of mirac-

ulous effects. But on the one hand it would be impossible to evaluate and authenticate the theological claims themselves in a reliable way, and on the other it would be of little value at this early stage to attempt to consider the ultimate potential of psi ability itself on the basis of its undeveloped state at the moment; for this we can safely wait. As it is, what we already know about psi, its coverage, its range of application and its adaptability will, if kept in proper perspective, suffice for the present. Even the question of how long it may take to gain sufficient application is not just now the primary concern.

What *does matter greatly* is the realization that this vital issue of morality has finally got beyond the interminably futile contest between the countless speculative and authoritative doctrines and disputations of the ages. The issue can now be connected with the underlying verifiable stratum of factual nature; there men have learned to solve their problems in a way that can be confirmed as repeatedly and meticulously as is individually desired. The rest is a matter of research on how much the study of psi can do and how best to develop its full potential.

Psi and Volitional Freedom

The bearing of parapsychology on morality however consists of more than this support of the role of religion in the guidance of conduct. A more specific connection can be seen in what the psi principle brings to the understanding of volitional freedom or "free will." Although this freedom would appear to be essential to morality (if not to behavior in general), it seems to be an almost forgotten idea in modern psychology. It may therefore need a word of explanation.

The essential concept of free will is simple enough to be readily appreciated by the average child; for example, he knows he will not be blamed for wrongdoing if he was *made* to do what he did—that he had no choice; he did not act of his own free will. We all recognize the machine has no mental choice and that moral and legal judgments require for a "verdict of guilty" evidence that the accused had enough appreciation of right and wrong to permit a choice and the freedom to exercise it. Free will then is choice of action with an option—a choice made *against* something from which the agent could exercise some kind and degree of independence.

Parapsychology is important to free will because it has shown that man has a degree of independence of physical law. So his life and conduct are no longer completely determined by the physical world to which he also belongs. This discovery tells *one way* (not the only way) in which volition can be free. It rules out the exclusively mechanistic

determinism that assumes that human decisions are wholly produced by the physiology of the nervous system in its sensorimotor exchange with the physical environment. Such a belief as that of behavioral fatalism leads the guilty individual to say the "fell clutch of circumstance" forced him to do his socially undesirable deed; his mind was made up for him; he had no alternative. Under this (rather current) physicalistic ethic the concept of morality is losing force; as a result such concepts as "moral fibre," "strength of character," "power of will," "self-discipline," and the like no longer have much social relevance.

One can perhaps see therefore how corrective it could be to the critical moral deterioration of the modern world to introduce the rediscovery of an angle on man's nature he once accepted on faith alone. It would restore the principle of personal choice based now on a firm scientific foundation, one that refutes the assumption that all human decision is based on mechanistic causality alone.

Let us focus more closely on how the research on the psi process can help to reinstate the "free will" concept. The individual who exercises free mental choice has to use processes that have some degree of independence of the physical order of nature to which his organism and environment belong. Parapsychology has shown that the psi function is in some way and degree demonstrably nonphysical. Accordingly psi allows the conclusion that in a relatively clearcut and important degree certain mental operations (at least) are free of physical determinism.

So in asking whether volitional judgment is free, it is enough to know that it is at least free to an experimentally demonstrated extent from the limitation of physical determinism that has come to be considered to be all-encompassing in the realm of natural science. While these matters will need more extensive investigation for fuller understanding and more precise limitation, this one fact is fundamental: The psi process departs so much and so strikingly from known physical law as to allow personal human agency to be considered in some way independent of unrestricted physical determinism—and hence to this extent capable of some freedom of choice. These are still small gains of course; and they are first steps over new ground. But their importance for man is neither small nor uncertain.

Some Recognized Limitations

I am aware that from the viewpoint of a pure science of parapsychology this freedom has nothing necessarily to do with morality or any of the social consequences of conduct, just as it has nothing to do,

strictly speaking, with application to religion or any other discipline. This viewpoint is important for clarification as to what this freedom, this independence of determinism really means. It will be interesting to see if there is not in the more purely parapsychical function of personality an increasingly large degree of freedom as with the greater development of psi ability it is further disencumbered of the interaction with the physical system of the organism and its environment. The search along this trail will of course lead to the fuller discovery of what this psi system is in the person, the living organism, and the universe—what lies behind the processes studied in the laboratory and the exceptional outbursts of psi manifestation that sometimes occur spontaneously.

One thinks, for example, at once of the possibility, perhaps even the likelihood, that while psi is independent in some degree of the physical framework through which it registers itself, it must accordingly of course have its own principles and order of functioning—its own binding lawfulness and limitations. Absolute freedom would be equivalent to chaos. It hardly needs saying that with this step into an understanding of mental freedom we shall be coming upon further problems, some of them doubtless still unknown.

Can Morality Be Explained Without Parapsychology?

On the other hand the relation between psi and volitional freedom makes it appear that it is the fact of the existence of the psi function in man that *makes it possible* for us to consider him a moral creature. This is not to forget what was earlier stated that psi is, as scientifically investigated, a mere ability or instrument; nor is it to overlook the fact that a great wealth of function, both individual and social, is involved in the total moral act. Admittedly too psi may not be the only extra-physical function in man's nature. Also it is the social order itself that determines the actual value system within a given society. *But the actual choice on which any system of true morality depends comes back to the volitional freedom of the individual* (i.e. to act with some independence of the forces of mechanistic causality within him). In other words, if we leave out the superphysical role of psi ability, it would be impossible to account for the morality that as we have seen depends on this freedom from physical determinism. In the present textbooks all the facts about the organism and the environment reduce, in as far as they are "explained," to physics and chemistry. It is *only* by establishing, as Beloff and a few others have recognized, that on the basis of the psi evidence we can now say the mind exists as a relatively distinctive reality and hence that

we can confirm the common personal feeling of freedom. Indeed, how else?

Thus the relevance of psi to morality is at least clear enough to make it a major project of scientific research. Why then should we not consider the entire problem area of the parapsychical process in ethical behavior as a designated branch of scientific study? The strength of the linkage of psi with volitional freedom is of course a major problem for parapsychology; and if religion is to be responsible for moral guidance it will need the help of parapsychology to explain what psi can do to increase man's self control and moral mastery. That it can do something, even if the extent is unknown, is the essential fact now. No other established scientific principle is known that can explain free volitional conduct in human society. It would appear to be man's problem No. 1, even if only dimly visible as yet.

Parapsychology and Post-Mortem Survival (PMS)

The aim here is to see what the Parapsychology of Religion can do on the question of the post-mortem destiny of man. The question has never been seriously taken up in the natural science, and thus among the conventional disciplines remains of interest only to theology. It has, however, been a tenet of almost all religions that a person in some way or degree survives the death of his body. The range of variety of the forms and conditions associated with this doctrine of continuing personal existence is very wide indeed, but one common social principle is rather evident in them all, namely their usefulness in the universal task of controlling human behavior. The heavens and hells and other forms of post-mortem rewards and punishments have been very closely interwoven into the systems of moral discipline.

It is not that the major religions have encouraged personal contact of the living with the dead. Rather it was a quite unorthodox development that led to the modern search for direct evidence of post-mortem existence and communication. It was not until the 18th century when the religions of the western world had already begun to lose their great authority over western thought that the practice of unorthodox and independent communication with discarnate beings through mediums was initiated; and when it was begun it was neither approved nor recognized by the church or temple or seminary. When however, around the middle of the 19th century, a lively practice of Spiritualism swept around the world with a loosely organized religion of its own, it captured so vigorous a popular enthusiasm that it could not be stopped by mere lack of support by the conventional institutions.

Nor could the wave of interest in spirit mediumship be stopped by the scepticism of scientists. As a matter of fact it was, along with a number of related cultist developments, something of a product of the controversial interaction between science and religion. Biology and especially the growing knowledge of the way the mind evolved along with the nervous system and the close connection of mind and body in the maturing embryo, made the idea of the existence of the mind without its organism increasingly hard to accept. It discouraged the belief in the soul as a separable entity capable of independent existence.

On the other hand, scientific speculation about new physical principles of universal character (such as the ether), combined with the phenomena of hypnotic trance and claims of psychic manifestations, helped to give some plausibility to notions of "etheric doubles," "astral bodies," and a spiritual state of existence with which entranced mediums could communicate, if only by telepathy. By the final quarter of the 19th century this combination of factors led to the formation of societies for psychical research, primarily oriented toward mediums.

The Duke Experiments in Mediumship

A few university scholars on both sides of the Atlantic took some part in these psychical research explorations, one of the most active being Professor William McDougall, F.R.S. of Oxford (after 1920 at Harvard and after 1927 at Duke). McDougall's sponsorship made it possible for an investigation of the claims of mediumship which (assisted by J. G. Pratt) I carried out in the mid-thirties at Duke with the well-known medium, Eileen J. Garrett. (I drew heavily on the work of others, especially of English investigators).

Mrs. Garrett's mediumship was observed under special conditions designed to exclude all sensory knowledge. The objective (or blind) evaluation of results too was handled with some newly developed precautions to avoid the effect of bias in the appraisal of success. Nevertheless it was found that the mediumistic communications were significantly appropriate to the individuals for whom they were intended; in the language of that day, "the occurrence of supernormal knowledge was demonstrated."

This looked as though the medium had at least the transcendent powers essential to communication with discarnate individuals who would of course be incapable of sensorimotor communication. If such persons really existed and could still communicate with the living, the exchange would naturally have to be by means of extrasensorimotor (psi) communication.

But while she was at the Duke Laboratory Mrs. Garrett was also independently tested for ESP ability and for a considerable period she performed comparatively well in the tests given her. These card-guessing tests gave approximately the same order of success both in the waking state of the medium and in her trance state (with what was said to be a "control personality" participating).

The main result of the Duke experiments with Mrs. Garrett, however, as seen in retrospect, was to focus closer attention on the logical inadequacy of the mediumistic type of test of the survival hypothesis. It was recognized then that in principle it should never have been considered to be capable of such a demonstration. The weak point is that there have to be existing sources of information to use in checking on the accuracy of the medium's own extrasensory powers. No way is known of getting around that alternative and regarding the medium's messages as acceptable evidence of spirit agency. Moreover, it is the same, not only with the information coming from the medium, but also with the many spontaneous message-bearing experiences that seem to suggest spirit agency to the persons reporting them much as the mediumistic utterances do to the medium.

The Failure of a Method

Where does this leave the matter? Nearly four decades have passed since the intensive re-examination of the survival evidence was made at Duke; and thus far no acceptable way of solving the problem of post-mortem survival has been found. In fact, no new proposal of an alternative method of solution capable of meeting the requirements has been encountered. The hope of proving survival has rested on the practice of mediumship with some support from spontaneous personal experiences of similar contact. No other source of evidence is known.

For the present, then, the survival problem, while still an open question for religion, had best be left so far as the Parapsychology of Religion is concerned on the shelf of problems without an adequate method. This is a shelf that is necessary in every branch of inquiry.

Having to set aside the survival question, however, is not the same as a completely negative finding. It is negative only to the methods on which the claims have been based and the types of evidence they used, but not to the question itself. The mistake about the method, for that matter, was in the original thought that such evidence ever could be conclusive. But that was an error much easier to make in the 19th century than it is today. Actually the result of the subsequent investigation is quite an advance from the point of view of the larger objective of science—finding "the way to what is *actually* there."

Then too it is a progressive step for parapsychology to have verified the psi ability of a medium when she was operating in a way that had been assumed to indicate survival. Very much as Mrs. Garrett did in the Duke Laboratory, many other mediums too have probably exercised the ability to reach out beyond themselves to sources of knowledge hidden from the sensory range of powers. In time and with better understanding and control over them, these same powers to intermediate between man and wider ranges and sources of knowledge could add enough to man's understanding of himself and his world to overshadow the dim and nebulous intuitions and speculations of the past as to whence the messages came.

But while the hypothesis of post-mortem communication cannot be crucially tested by known methods, the presence of a transcendent superphysical factor in the biology of man has been established. The further exploration of this other side of man's nature should be expected eventually to discover whether it is in some degree independently separable, and capable of discarnate existence and survival. But this is also part of the main program of parapsychology itself, and just as the extraphysical aspects of man's nature themselves emerged incidentally from the ongoing psi research program—so we must expect to encounter extrabiological indicia as well, if any such exist or occur.

Meanwhile it is well to remember, while thinking about this question of the termination-versus-continuation of human consciousness at the time of death, that science has yet to discover the evolutionary *origin* of conscious experience in the universe! Until it does so we should not expect to find it an easy matter to solve the problem of its destiny beyond the grave! We still have only speculative guesses at its underlying relation to the great driving energetic system of nature. Only the most venturesome philosophers even try to theorize as to how conscious thought "gears in" with the brain. Many important problems will have to wait for eventual enlightenment on the large mind-body relation and this one (PMS) may perhaps be among them.

How the Problem Remains

The Parapsychology of Religion is of course only one research branch that is searching for knowledge of man's nature. Other areas of fact too must be considered and the intellectual changes of the times also recognized. Religion itself is in flux, and in parapsychology the interest in PMS has shifted greatly during the last fifty years from a generally favorable attitude (approaching conviction) to one of minimal confidence and to a greatly diminished interest in the problem.

The educated public too has lost much of its former interest, except among those occult and semi-clerical groups that easily thrive on uncritical demonstrations of pseudo-scientific character. But those who have studied the sciences of man know the close parallel between mind and body in evolution, in the maturation of the individual, as well as in all the variations of health and education. Thus as knowledge has grown, the mind-body interaction has come to look increasingly like an unbreakable unit. This means that the evidence of complete mind-body separability, if any should ever be found, would have to be very strong to be acceptably conclusive.

At the same time another change has been occurring. The use of concepts of immortality as moral weaponry has waned almost to the vanishing point. The burden of the graveside sermon has taken on more of an emphasis on the contribution of the deceased to his fellowmen in this world and less on the rewards awaiting him in the next. Today the prospect of mankind's crucial need to face up to the compelling global challenges of his earthly existence threaten to intensify this preoccupation with the here-and-now so far as to obscure otherworldly concerns.

However the Parapsychology of Religion in its own search for the transcendent nature of man need not be influenced either way by the swing of interest and preference, or even by arguments of the social value of a given doctrine. In any case, the history of mankind assures us that on the basis of the past the balanced growth of continuing knowledge holds the best promise of the truth about man's destiny. Keeping the Parapsychology of Religion on a truly scientific course is the thing, or an essential part of it.

Meanwhile another mode of human survival is becoming an increasingly important part of the cultural complex. This is the social heritage that lives on, the impact and imprint that everyone leaves. As the ways of recording and communicating human behavior expand and occupy the entire space and time of our daily lives, the separations at the end of life are naturally much less acutely poignant. The very fullness of man's growing social involvement and enrichment does much to reduce the gap of personal loss. Social evolution gives the individual ever greater opportunity to leave the message of his life in the product of his work and his example, and all the complex social structure his life touches, and by this the break of bereavement is lessened. Could any past conception of a spirit heaven or summerland, compare with the vital influences in the world today through the *social survival* of Jesus, Shakespeare or Pasteur? Indeed such survival extends their own life-

time's contribution countless thousands of times; and still grows endlessly.

Thus we can see the post-mortem survival of man is a great question that remains; but it does not remain the same. Rather, as in any science, new advances may provide new methods for this problem. Suppose for the moment that we learn how to improve psi-testing and training so as to provide subjects with a more reliable order of awareness of success (confidence response); such an advance should permit us eventually to judge whether or not the subject is correct in claiming contact with a discarnate source of messages. This testing of *sources* of information is in any case a mainline project for psi research just as is the improvement of tests of accuracy and confidence in general. In other words, if psi can identify all the types and conditions of targets claimed for it thus far, we should be able to push this ability to the point of identifying non-living sources if they exist. Thus far no limits have been found to the range of psi cognition. I anticipate that a method for discriminating living targets from non-living can be developed like any other distinction. I have suggested (Rhine, 1975) an approach via animal tests to see if psi ability can be registered as continuing beyond the end of other life activities, or in any way independent of vital functions during terminal stages of life. New approaches do seem to be opening up for scientific test.

Parapsychology and the Question of Divinity

Has parapsychology anything to do with the question of whether there is a divine or personal order in the universe? If this query has ever been raised within the circle of psi research it has so far as I know left no trace. Now however, it must be considered, for logically parapsychology can, as we shall see, be shown to have a definite relation to this question, in fact, almost the same relation as that between parapsychology and the PMS problem.

The best approach would be to take the question of divine agency (DA) in its most elementary form somewhat as follows: Can any verifiable personal agency be identified as operating in the universe beyond that of living things (or those who were once alive)? This formulation frees the discussion from some closely related issues that do not concern us at this preliminary stage. For example, the parenthetical addition excludes the PMS question. For the present we need only to search for evidence of intelligently purposive action outside the range of human and animal behavior. Other questions must wait if this one is, as intended only a beginning question.

Surprisingly enough, this formulation is almost an exact parallel of the question of PMS. Both doctrines do assume alike the existence of incorporeal or spirit personalities; in the one case divine or extrahuman personal entities and in the other, discarnate forms of deceased human beings.

Fortunately because of this close similarity of the two problems, it will not be necessary to review in great detail the specific way in which the already existing findings about psi bear on the present question. I have already pointed out the probable parapsychical nature of the varieties of communication men have believed they have with spirits of the deceased. Those who are familiar with the types of experience through which men have believed themselves to be in contact with their *divinities* will recognize the similarity of these experiences to those of spontaneous communication believed to have been experienced with discarnate *human* spirits.

The more dramatic forms of these communications of divine messages are much like hallucinatory psi experiences. They might, for example, consist of an angel's voice or the visual apparition of deity; again the message may appear as handwriting on the wall or as a portentous sign in the heavens. Dreams likewise play a prominent part as vehicles of celestial exchange. So also does the silent communication that may come as intuitive revelation to one in state of surrender to divine influence. These are communications of cognitive guidance. But actual physical manifestation too may be taken as a medium of divine communication when sufficiently meaningful to be interpretable as a miraculous sign from the "hand of God." The sun itself has been said to stand still, or a city wall to fall down.

The parallelism of these types and forms of occurrence is obviously a double one. First, as noted above, the human experiences leading to belief in DA are almost identical in form and modality to those which have led mankind to belief in PMS; and second, both are in principle essentially like spontaneous psi experiences as these have been studied and classified in parapsychology—although usually of greater magnitude.

The differences are of course important too. For example, the *experiments* that established the case for psi communication in humans (and its types and forms and conditions) had to demonstrate significant effects in controlled laboratory tests before they were acceptable. On the other hand, in all experiences in which men believed themselves to be in close exchange with either the divine order or the world of discarnate spirits there is so far no conclusive evidence in any case that they actually were. Even when in the study of mediumship at Duke (in

relation to the PMS problem) it was found, as we have seen, that under controlled conditions a medium could to a significant degree simulate spirit communication, the discarnate source (i.e. in a spirit world) of the messages has not been reliably verified thus far.

As I have indicated however, no comparably controlled experiment has been attempted on the question of divinity, but the two problems are so similar that it hardly needs to be done; both would have to involve the same capacity to receive communications beyond the range of the sensorimotor system. Accordingly, the possibility of psi receptivity on the part of the seer, the prophet, and all the founders of the religions can be recognized in this case as it can now be in the case of the medium.

The point that emerges here is that parapsychology has already confirmed in principle the identical types of transcendent intercourse between man and another order on which the acceptance of religious experiences through the ages has been based. This observation is of course the close equivalent to the outcome of the survival issue, as already reviewed. In other words, we now know that mankind must at least have had the capacity needed to make the contacts on which these two main doctrines of the religions were founded. That much has been cleared. Without such powers of superphysical communication and without the repeated human experience of its reality in daily life it is hard to see how there could have been anything like the religious systems that have emerged throughout the cultures of the human race.

On the other hand, the scientific discovery today of the very principles that gave religion the impressive authority of seemingly miraculous powers—authority that brought it into conflict with the physicalistic sciences as they emerged—has given it a new status of security. Its basic claim to a transcendent order of reality has thus been experimentally vindicated.

The Evidence is Inconclusive

The question still remains, however, as to whether these recognizably essential (psi) abilities as such actually yielded any conclusive evidence of DA in the messages from deities that came to the founders of the religions. The answer to that question—so far as the methods of parapsychology go—is quite as inconclusive as it was with the question of PMS. Thus far no person having a religious experience which he interpreted as bearing a divine message could have known clearly whether or it was indeed of such an origin; he had no reliable way to verify that interpretation of his subjective experience; nor do we have any even today. The prophet may have had ever so strong a *conviction* about the

source of his authority, and his messages might well contain (as in the comparable case of the medium) significant wisdom and information beyond his own capacities to supply. Nevertheless it is always possible to interpret the messages of the dream, or vision, or the miraculous physical sign as products of the recipient's own parapsychical powers just as it was seen to be with the purported communications with the spirits of the dead.

The logic of this type of personal evidence of DA has been that such a "miraculous" message simply had to come from divine sources; it was otherwise unexplainable (but so too are the almost parallel cases of ordinary spontaneous psi). Again, much of this "evidence" appeared to the interpreter as miraculously realistic signs of divinity—perhaps a vision of God himself. Such vivid projections seem however after comparative study to be quite plausibly explainable as subjective hallucinations and cultural artifacts, and cannot qualify as acceptable evidence of the existence and agency of deity as they suggest.

The same logic applies not only to the transcendental experiences that have contributed to the founding of the theologies of the past but quite as well to the personal experiences that have served to sustain the individual's faith in his relation with the divine order in his own private life. As we have seen, these types of experiences, if genuinely parapsychical, could logically serve as a sufficient mode of personal contact between mankind and the higher personal agencies his religion has taught him to accept, whatever they were. But this was not *necessarily* so.

Where the Question Stands

We come now to the present frontier of the Parapsychology of Religion on the issue of DA. The evidence of DA based on religious experiences (like that of PMS based on mediumship) cannot from the nature of the type of evidence be taken as conclusive. Rather it leaves that problem (again paralleling that of PMS) as one on which the present methodology of parapsychology still offers no dependable solution. In fact it is now in order to put the question in a more searching form: *What could a divine being conceivably do to give the scholar today the kind of proof of agency he would need for a reliable conclusion?* Obviously until we have a positive answer to this question, one that gives us a method to try, the Parapsychology of Religion will have to let the question wait, along with the already much more investigated (though hardly more advanced) problem of PMS.

But while the Parapsychology of Religion must leave the question of ultimate origins and divine agency for the present, it has brought

out the evidence of the principle of superphysical interaction in man himself and something of what this implies about his relation to the universe. For example, it seems fairly certain that this psi principle gave ancient man the basis for his concept of a supernatural order of DA in the first place. The science of psi makes at least rationally possible and even plausible, some of the kinds of evidence of DA that have been accepted, though it does not make the DA interpretation in any way conclusive. Also it does render the supernatural attributes of omniscience and omnipotence reasonable derivatives and projections of man's own natural, though superphysical, potential—given only the theological license to make them awesome, supreme and unfailing (which conceivably may yet be ultimately done by an enlightened science of the future, even as today's engineers have equalled the power of Jove's thunderbolts).

Meanwhile the worker in the Parapsychology of Religion will continue his search for more knowledge of the parapsychical and of the entire system of personal agency in the universe. He will study the range and penetration of the psi principle, its place in the world of causality, its control and universality. In the broader Science of Man a stage may eventually come when it will be clearer than it is today as to just what part, if any, personal agency plays in the universe, its origin, evolution, and in the affairs of human society. But again, as with PMS, the hope can rightly be held that methods will be discovered to explore the possibility of DA in the universe in a conclusive, scientific way. *Just as the medium may eventually be trained to reveal through her psi capacity the additional knowledge of origin as well as the content of her communications, so may the seer who believes he is divinely inspired in the source of his messages may be helped to identify whatever divine features be present.* It would appear quite logical to expect such capability to be developed in this search for divine origins of religious experience as in any other type of inquiry.

The Parapsychology of Religion will have these great problems to cope with as parapsychology itself moved ahead. Progress in the control and extended use of psi will naturally find these and many more areas of application. Our main need is to keep the questions clear and watch for opportunities to attack them with the new methods and insights of this field.