

AFTERNOON GENERAL DISCUSSION
DAY TWO

TAYLOR: I have one or two things to say to Robert that I didn't get a chance to say. First of all, I wonder if you didn't mishear your detractor [Beloff] and he didn't say, "Shame on you;" he said, "Shaman you!" I'll tell you the reason I was thinking about that when you said it.

ALMEDER: Well, he didn't say that.

TAYLOR: I know he didn't say that. I was just responding to my phenomenological state. I saw these great epistemologies of Christianity and religion converging together in one spot as you were speaking. It made me think that science is Christianity without a God since, of course, science has grown out of principally Christian culture, meanwhile denying it has anything to do with religion. That was what I heard. You made me think first about some of the differences between the Old and the New Testament. In the Old Testament Jehovah is the God with a lot of rules and no mercy. In the New Testament we have the myth of the resurrection of Jesus. Within the myth of the resurrection we have the basic principle of the transcendent, which is the basis for popular folk psychology today in the United States. Spiritual transformation of personality is not an idea derived from Old Testament religion. I was really looking at science and religion in relation to the Old and the New Testament. The reason I make this comparison is that you were dealing with a concept of reincarnation, which I know principally through Hindu and Buddhist epistemology. I'm not that familiar with it within a Christian context except that I have always thought in a metaphoric and symbolic sense that the myth of the resurrection of Jesus and the idea that at the Day of Judgment the dead will rise again are rebirth motifs, if you would, if taken in a visionary or metaphoric sense. I'm sure that you know and I would like to certainly be informed of the history of how this idea dropped out of Christianity because it was probably there in the beginning, given all the other influences of the early Christian church. I see it is as a historical problem. So, to hear you talk about reincarnation and whether or not there is belief in a God is somewhat problematic to me. Most of the time I was following you, I was considering reincarnation

in a Buddhist context. Buddhism is, of course, a non-theistic religion. The goal of Buddhism is not sin and salvation so much as the end of suffering. It isn't so much a theology as it is a psychology of transformation. And so, the mixing of these two great epistemologies together seemed to me somewhat incompatible. I was able to follow you as long as I stayed within your frame of reference because that is really what I think you were trying to achieve in responding to whatever this gentleman had said. But I feel that the main point for me in what you said was that there is still a lot of Christianity in the positivist science that we espouse.

ALMEDER: Well, it wasn't my intention to say that. You found it there? I don't know what you mean when you say that there's a lot of Christianity and Judaism in positivist science.

TAYLOR: I was referring to science as it arose in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Positivist science is a *reaction* to the Judeo-Christian religion.

ALMEDER: That has nothing to do with natural science.

TAYLOR: Well, in a certain sense I think that it does. I think that everyone will admit that while normative testing is the primary focus of science, nevertheless, creative hypothesis formulation, intuitive insights, and rich mental imagery still go on there. Justine was trying to indicate that yesterday with the example of Kekulé. The fact is that we are still human beings who grew up in a Judeo-Christian culture that produced science. Even now science remains the most important contribution that will long outlast the culture that created it. We seem to come to science with very culture-bound constructs. That's why I thought it was so amusing to be giving an example of a woman from India, who seems to have some evidence of a former life. To interpret her experience in this weak scientific Judeo-Christian context seems somewhat absurd, if you know anything about Eastern religion and philosophy. The way those expressions would be understood within the cultural context of India has nothing to do with the conversation we are having. Personality transformation has nothing to do with the issues of science in my opinion. Science has no comprehension of that process. Phenomenologically, however, I also believe that culture does color the way in which you try and conduct empirical science.

BRAUDE: Well, now you lost me, too, because I don't understand why you say the Indian cases have nothing whatsoever to do with what's going on in the culture. Because in those cultures, as well, these cases are regarded as significant precisely because they are cases of ostensible reincarnation. It's an issue for them in that culture to determine whether the evidence is genuine.

TAYLOR: Yes. But the way you have cast it, you make it seem like the Western empirical scientific method of truth is universal and value-free and applicable in all cultures. I think it's just the Western view superimposed upon other cultures.

BRAUDE: This is not the Western view of scientific method. This is the interest in deciding whether claims are true or false.

TAYLOR: I completely agree with what you're saying because that is the way Indians think today. After all, they have been thoroughly educated in the Western tradition.

BRAUDE: The mere concern with truth and falsity of statements and whether people's behavior is deceptive or not has to do with the Western method of science? You know, that was something that people were interested in before there was a Western method of science.

TAYLOR: But within a traditional religious context in India the question of reincarnation was posed quite differently.

BRAUDE: In those cases of reincarnation?

TAYLOR: Yes, except for the Indian scientist who has been trained in the Western method of science who wants to take it up.

BRAUDE: You think the families don't care whether their child is really a reincarnated individual?

TAYLOR: I think that they believe it without the kind of proof that you are trying to offer them through science.

BRAUDE: The family might, but the neighbors might not.

TAYLOR: I think, ultimately, decisions about reality by Indians, themselves, are made on grounds other than the scientific evidence we might present to them.

ROLL: I, too, was somewhat disappointed with Steve's paper, not for the reasons just mentioned but because I couldn't find anything wrong with it. I like Robert's paper much more!

ALMEDER: Thank you very much.

ROLL: I don't think Stevenson has responded to the place memory theory. In other words, memories are encoded in space not only in brains and they can be picked up in space, not just from another person. I also would ask you to consider the OBE hypothesis. I think in the same article that you were referring to by Osis and McCormick, Osis said something to the effect that OBEs show many of the characteristics of ESP including the characteristic of psi missing. I believe that's a near quote from the article. An old term for out-of-body experience is ESP projection—the image of projecting something out of the body. Very little work, unfortunately, has been done on the physiological and neurological aspects of OBEs, but with Keith Harary, we found that while his brain waves moved towards alpha and indicated a receptive, quiet state, his body showed signs of activity such as increased breathing and heart rate. There's another series of observations about OBEs which was first noticed by Charles Tart with respect to Robert Monroe. Monroe is one of those who has apparent veridical OBEs; mixed in with those OBEs are fantasy OBEs and OBEs where he seems to be experientially in the right environment, but what he sees is not what is there. Tart found that Monroe's rapid eye movements were absent when he was asleep. He suggested that the OBE activity had taken over dreaming for Monroe and that the OBE was a kind of dreaming, a kind of hallucinatory activity. I would like to consider the possibility that OBEs depend upon an active nervous system. They may be projections and when this nervous system folds, as in death, the OBE disappears also because it's dependent upon an active brain. This, by the way, goes with a hypothesis that OBEs serve the survival of the body. The OBE reflects a mechanism whereby we can project our experience of the self outside the body. By apparently occupying a non-physical self we leave the damaged body to do its own repair without our consciousness being present with all the stress and the anxiety that is associated with that. Do you see? It's a sort of dissociation that allows the body to do its own repair in its own time. It's like the ejection seat of a fighter airplane. You go out of the body. You leave the body to its own repair. All of us may have this sort of homunculus in the brain that can do that.

ALMEDER: I take it that's not a question; that's just a comment.

ROLL: Let's say it's an invitation to respond.

ALMEDER: The first thing was about Stevenson who hasn't responded to the place memory hypothesis. Are you claiming that memories float through the air, and somehow or another the children pick them up?

ROLL: No. They don't float in the air. They're connected with physical systems, not only with brains but with the places where the events took place.

ALMEDER: How do children get these memories, then?

ROLL: If you don't make a distinction between mind and matter, if mind and matter, in fact, are not sharply distinguishable, we may leave our memories not only in brain structures, but we may also leave our memories in physical space, in tables and chairs, in walls, and in fields. People who come into these areas may then have an experience of what went on in the place. Typically, these are traumatic events just as they tend to be in hauntings.

ALMEDER: So, are you saying that memories are physical objects that float through the air and stick to walls and things like that?

ROLL: They don't float.

ALMEDER: Well, how do they get to the walls?

ROLL: Your memories don't float around your head!

ALMEDER: I'm trying to make sense of this. Somehow or another that means memories leave the people when they die, float around the universe, and attach themselves in the neighborhood and on the walls.

ROLL: I'm trying to communicate to you and to everyone else who cares to listen that the mind, the psyche is emplaced. In other words, it is not restricted to a body. It's not just embodied; it's also emplaced. Aptly, places are evocative of memories, not only in the psychic way but also in the psychological way; we tend to remember events that have happened in a certain place when we enter that place. The same thing operates parapsychologically. It's not my idea. It's Price's idea. That was how he accounted for psychometry—apparently picking up memories from objects. And that's how he accounted for hauntings. If you examine rebirth memories, you find the same characteristics there; that is, they tend to be remembered when the kid passes through a village and thereby picks up memories from the life of a deceased individual who used to live there. The same may happen when someone who knew the deceased becomes a neighbor of the kid. With this

person or with this place comes the memories, comes the events, the traces, or the fourth dimensional manifold of which this three dimensional one is a cross-cutting. Whatever the terminology is, there seems to be something like memories that are emplaced.

BRAUDE: Well, you'll be relieved, Bill, because we now have something to dispute. You resurrected one of our oldest disagreements! The problem I have with that view, quite apart from what Stevenson may or may not have said about it, is the problem I or any red-blooded anti-mechanist would have to any trace theory of memory. It doesn't matter whether we're talking about engrams in the brain or Plato's theory of traces as impressions in wax or Pribram's more apparently sophisticated but equally crude view of the holographic analysis of memory. If the very concept of a memory trace is incoherent, it doesn't matter whether they are in brains.

ROLL: Forget about traces. The point is that I carry some memories around in some way or another. My brain is at least a place of accessing memories. So, you can call space, the table over there, or whatever, a place of accessing memories associated with the past history of that object. I don't like words like "traces" and "engrams". I don't know where they are. I haven't found any, you know. In reading the literature I don't see that there's any evidence for them. What there clearly is evidence for is that you can remember things associated with physical bodies. You can also remember things associated with other people among the objects where these people have lived. Psychometry is a rich area but nobody's paying any attention to it. This is what Eileen Garrett's practice essentially was based on.

BRAUDE: But are you not saying that memory is in objects?

ROLL: Basically what I want to say is that memories are accessed through or by means of objects.

BRAUDE: But that's noncommittal as to whether memories are in them.

ROLL: I don't know where they are. That way is trivial. Get to the issue of the thing, Steve.

BRAUDE: Well, I'm trying. I'm trying to figure out what it is you're saying. If all you're saying is that by handling some object a person can remember things associated with it, that seems to be true. That's the truth of psychometry. But it's not an explanatory hypothesis.

If you were trying to explain that in terms of memories being in them in some way, that's explanatory, but false.

ROLL: Well, I'll go with that. Then we agree again. This is not getting us anywhere. We're agreeing more and more!

EDGE: Eugene, do you agree?

TAYLOR: Only if you believe that all matter is conscious. To me that solves the problem because what you're trying to say is there is some relationship between what is going on with a human being and things going on out there in the physical world. So, if you are a pansychist, then it's quite plausible. If the thing is dead and something has to pass from something living to something dead and adhere to it and you have to be able to see it or measure it in some physical way, then obviously, we are going down the wrong road here. It seems to me that what's at issue is something much more interesting, which has to do with the fact that we sense the discussion should go in this direction. To do so with a scientific frame of reference, is not going to get us there. There is an alternative explanation.

ROLL: I think that this is getting us in the right direction. I also think I'm going in the right direction by postulating that the psyche is emplaced. Once you postulate that the psyche is emplaced, you have an explanatory framework for these place memories. They are reincarnation memories. From a certain very significant point of view they are rebirth memories in that they are continuations of ourselves or of the psyche in physical objects. But they don't necessarily require the postulate of a separate self or ego to sustain these memories.

EDGE: But that's precisely what you want, isn't it, Robert?

ALMEDER: I take it that, for you, the child has these memories, and that's to say the child remembers that something or other is so. The act of remembering would seem to be something that is an activity associated with certain brain states, although not in the child. I have trouble with the idea. It is just a matter I don't understand. It could be memories out here that one accesses too. It seems to me a peculiar way to talk about a memory and that somehow or another when I die, my memories float about. I guess the question is: How do these children get them if they are reincarnation memories? You might say, "Well, we don't know how." There is nothing wrong with the idea of a set of memories and a whole batch of other things surviving one's corruption.

When it picks up another body, that is probably what we mean by reincarnation. Is that what you are saying, that the children have these memories because these memories are actually properties of minds that somehow or another get assimilated into people? In that case the children are reincarnated.

ROLL: Well, yes. But furthermore I'm saying that these memories are accessed through physical objects that the child gets into contact with. And getting into contact with the physical object, the child thereby gets into contact with the memories associated with that physical object.

EDGE: So you are not talking about an isolated personal identity that gets transferred from one body to another, which is the more classical view of reincarnation. You're talking about another mode of explaining those memories, which brings up the interesting question of: What would count as evidence for survival? Is there anything? Have we made the question of survival unfalsifiable? We've asked whether or not super-psi is unfalsifiable. Is the question of survival unfalsifiable now? That is, is there evidence that we could think of that if we got it, we would say, "I now think I have it"? Given that our epistemological hopes are a little lower, that is, we need reasonable levels of evidence, is there anyway that we could reach this level? What would it be?

PALMER: In the ultimate sense, probably not. The reason is that whether something survives or not is very much like the question of whether God exists. You are asking a metaphysical question. You are asking to reify something, to make a reality statement. I don't think we can ultimately do that. But I'm not sure that's as great an impediment as it might seem to be on the surface. What we are attempting to do in science is to create models of reality. Often we consider these to be conventions, like Steve's distinction between level of description and substance. Sometimes the models, like in some computer models, don't correspond to something that we would call real. We try to set these models up in such a way that they generate predictions, and then we test them. To the extent that those predictions are confirmed, we say that the model is "true". I think this is what we can do and what we should do in survival research. This is the point I was trying to make in the first part of my paper—to try to get a model that has certain

empirical consequences. If they are confirmed, then in that sense the model is true. That's as far as we can go. The final step beyond that is; for example, "Are there really psiads out there," which is a step that we can't take with science. I'm not sure we can get there at all. On the other hand, there is a sense in which what we do in science is really no different than if we ask the question, "Is this table real?" With reference to an argument which I think I got from Bertrand Russell in his *Principles of Philosophy*, I get certain sensations, and all I have direct contact with are those sensations. They are coordinated in a certain way. I see a certain thing, and when I try to touch what I see, I get certain sensations. Putting all these sensations together, I get this concept of a table, from which I conclude there's really a table there.

EDGE: What group of sensations would you need to say, "There's survival out there"?

PALMER: Sensations from data, meter readings, or whatever, based on confirmations of my theory or anybody else's theory that provide for survival.

ALMEDER: I think you can conclusively falsify it. If you can conclusively falsify anything, I think you can conclusively falsify things like reincarnation in much the same way that you could falsify the hypothesis that there were dinosaurs. As a matter of fact, I think we probably know as strongly that people survive their deaths as we know that there were dinosaurs. You could falsify the dinosaur hypothesis. If somebody could empirically confirm that in all those cases where we had so-called alleged bones of dinosaurs, they were really things like rhinoceri that those bones were constructed arbitrarily, by various people who wanted to have fun and that the footprints were put down by people, you could falsify the hypothesis that there were dinosaurs. We all believe it. It just so happens that belief in the existence of dinosaurs is the best available explanation to fit all the data, the fossils, the bones. I can't reproduce it at will. But if I go to Asia Minor and walk around and keep digging and sculling around, I might find another. So, continually finding evidence helps the confirmation that there are dinosaurs. In the case of dinosaurs if we don't get any more remains or fossils, it wouldn't follow that there weren't any dinosaurs. It just follows that there were a limited number, and we got them all. Now, on reincarnation if you believe in reincarnation, then what would

happen if all of a sudden you couldn't get any more cases of people who claim to be reincarnated, nobody had those memories, and there weren't any systemic, unified, rich cases of those memories accompanied by certain skills like linguistic skills, xenoglossy and things of that sort? Well, you wouldn't have to conclude that reincarnation doesn't exist anymore. Maybe all the people are reincarnated; the rest have somehow or another stopped reincarnating. I think you could disconfirm the reincarnation hypothesis if you could prove empirically that, in fact, people who had these skills, for example, the ability to remember these sorts of things in past lives or speaking languages that they hadn't seen before, all had some sort of a little brain defect and you found there was a neurological zip on certain parts. Then all of a sudden you could somehow or another manipulate somebody else's brain and find that under those circumstances they started telling the very same story. In other words, I can imagine where the alternative explanation could only be done in terms of brain chemistry because you could manipulate the brain to get the same effects of people who would start telling these stories about their past lives and playing the piano that they hadn't seen. I can easily imagine that as a matter of fact all of this phenomena could be the result of neurologically idiosyncratic people. You might find that out. If that were to occur and you could induce it by that kind of brain activity but couldn't get it otherwise, I would drop the thesis of reincarnation right away as an empirically falsified hypothesis. I know what I would take as evidence changing my mind. What bothers me is that there are people who say, "No matter what the evidence, this won't happen." As for out-of-body experiences, if John can take the best or the strongest cases of OBEs, I don't have any problem identifying ESP with brain states that don't require minds. But if you could actually explain in a reasonably plausible way how you could move objects at a distance during these cases and produce that fairly regularly, I'd drop the claim that OBEs are evidence for survival. You would have to go from case to case, from area to area. I think in mediumship it would be quite different. There are some other things there. I can also give you other reasons, too. But I'm convinced that all of that is empirically falsifiable and that it's an empirically meaningful hypothesis.

BRAUDE: Well, as someone who is often portrayed as not taking anything that would count as evidence for survival, let me just say what I would find personally compelling. It would have to be a constellation of things. We'd have to find a case where, first of all, we would be dealing with ostensible knowledge "how" rather than knowledge "that". Propositional knowledge simply won't cut it. But, if a subject in an ostensible case of survival displayed an ability which, as far as we could tell, was radically discontinuous from any other abilities that the subject had and if sufficient psychological probing into the case revealed no hidden needs or agendas relative to which evidence for survival would be deeply meaningful or important to that person or to people close to that person, and if the ability manifested by the subject were clearly associated with the equally idiosyncratic ability of some individual who we know to be dead, then I'd say we have a *prima facie* case for dismissing the super-psi hypothesis and accepting the survivalist hypothesis.

EDGE: If you have one and three, would that be sufficient? Why would two be necessary? That is, if you can give a psychological case that a person may be motivated toward wanting survival in some way, and you have the first and the third conditions satisfied, would it be necessary to satisfy the second?

BRAUDE: It is a good question, and I am not sure. I think it would probably depend on just what the nature of the ability was that was in question, how discontinuous it was from everything else we know about the person after a careful examination, and how clearly or thoroughly it reproduces or mimics the abilities we uniquely associated with a deceased person and how idiosyncratic that was. That may be enough. But we haven't got any case that comes close to meeting any of those conditions. So long as one and three are not robustly satisfied, then I think the issue of motivated psi becomes more important.

OWENS: Why the distinction between procedural knowledge and propositional?

BRAUDE: It seems to me that so long as we are dealing with mere knowledge "that" rather than knowledge "how," that is, the mere acquisition of information. There are reasons for thinking that any living person, given suitable circumstances, could have acquired that information by psi. I would say one of the cases that has strengthened

my conviction about that is Eisenbud's treatment of the Cagliostro case which, although not coercive, suggests how knowledge of some pretty recondite information can be acquired by people in a survivalist context when it would be relevant to those concerned.

EDGE: In other words, I think what you're saying is we have good empirical evidence, laboratory evidence even, for propositional psi.

BRAUDE: All that requires is the mere getting of some information. If it is there somewhere in a library, if it is there in somebody's mind, then it's not much of a leap from what we already know to be the case about even humdrum ESP. If I were suddenly to manifest certain abilities that are quite discontinuous with other capacities that I have and if those abilities were to be uniquely associated with the idiosyncratic and quite striking abilities of some deceased individual, I think that's *prima facie* more impressive. And I think that's why people have on the whole focused on knowledge "how" rather than knowledge "that" as being most impressive.

ALMEDER: There's one qualification. I read that same story, too. But I have some reservations about it because I think Stevenson pointed out that there really isn't very good evidence from psi that young people at that age are as accurate or as detailed as they sometimes turn out to be in these cases. In other words, I tend to agree with you that it's continuous with a psi explanation. But there's a level of achievement and success that these children have that isn't plausibly attributable to psi just because they haven't practiced it before; it's very focused, and it's extremely reliable in high degrees, probabilities of 90%. You don't get that typically in psi. They're usually hit or miss, and people have to practice it a lot. And so, I'd be a little cautious about it, Stephen. I tend to agree with you. That's why in the cases I took to be interesting, as soon as you got over the propositional material, the stuff that had to come with it also had to be skills, knowing how to do something or other, which were not as easily set aside. So, while I am sympathetic, I think we live on probabilities most of the time. I know it's not a knock-down argument. In the George Pellew case, the G.P. case, there was so much precise, accurate information so continuously, that it seems to me that it's implausible to think that that could have been explained by psi or that it was all propositional.

ROLL: The discussion here is essentially the discussion that's been going on for about 100 years now. The type of evidence that Steve points to as necessary or that would make us turn to the survival hypothesis is the type of evidence that's been discussed for 100 years. The most recent attempts to get at this type of evidence perhaps consists in the posthumous messages, particularly the coded messages left by Thouless, Gaither Pratt, and several others. They would remember the keys to the codes and communicate them through mediums afterwards. I have very diligently attempted to get these codes from Gaither Pratt, both with psychics and with members of his family. Throughout the years with respect to this new way of getting messages from the dead as well as the previous attempts to leave posthumous codes, none of that has succeeded. I think that whole approach to the survival issue is dead. We need to get another basic hypothesis as to what exists prior to death, before we can deal with what continues afterwards. One problem is that the individuals who investigate or who produce a hypothesis about posthumous life are academic types such as ourselves whose mentation, whose identity, and whose very existence is what's going on in their heads, the rational and the structured process we call thinking. It's such a narrow perspective. We need to have psychics participate in this investigation, or we have to train ourselves to be psychics, to get a clue as to what the psyche, or the self, is before death and what the self may be afterwards. It's so difficult for us to conceive of something as simple as the idea of place memories. It's very hard for us because of our backgrounds to even consider that possibility. Yet it is what psychics do all the time.

LAWRENCE: I just want to throw something in and in some ways it's a response to something that Bill said earlier. One of the ideas that we came up with (and I don't know whether this is worth exploring or not) had to do with the patient who was "pronounced dead" and then "came back". One of the things that we know about survival with patients is that people who are in a situation where they lower the demand of oxygen can live without oxygen longer, for example, patients who are hypothermic (thrown in ice water, etc.). One of the things that we had talked about was if you thought that what was contained (and obviously this is very dualistic) in the body was some kind of energy system that put a demand on the body for an increased

metabolism, it would then increase oxygen consumption. If something really left the body, would you be able to measure a lower demand of oxygen in the body during that state? It's a little different from what you said about giving the body a rest. But it's obviously, a biophysiological approach. It would seem, then, that you should have something happening to the body if something really is leaving the body. That might be one explanation for it.

TAYLOR: As legitimate as the question appears, it would seem to me that all of the people who have ever died would have to come to the scientists to be measured, probably all at once. Everyone who was incredulous would then be able to turn to their neighbor and say, "I see it, too." Or scientists themselves would have to go and find the place where all the dead have gone. To convince those who have already come to a conclusion is almost impossible. The situation is much like the Shaker fountain on the Mountain of Zion—only the believers see the water flowing out of the rock. Even if the dead did rise and come to the scientists, the scientists wouldn't see anything out there, because I think that reincarnation does have something to do with a state of consciousness beyond the one that science is exploring.

EDGE: By the way, I think it's probably my classes where all the dead have gone!