

## PARAPSYCHOLOGY AND THE TEACHING OF PHILOSOPHY

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A conviction of the present writer is that parapsychology can be of value in the teaching of philosophy. Doubtless, too, some branches of philosophy, e.g., philosophy of science, can be of value to parapsychology, but it is only the former matter that will be considered here.

Peter A. French, in his introduction to *Philosophers in Wonderland*,<sup>1</sup> said:

“Let us then define *paranormal events* as those events the accounts of which must include sentences which are strictly nonsensical. These sentences cannot be true or false statements because they violate the grounds of our judging truth and falsity.”

If French is right, it makes no sense to relate parapsychology to the teaching of philosophy for it would only be to add nonsense to it.

What are French's grounds for this statement? One must present an account of the essentials of his view in order to assess them.

In his *Introduction*, French makes a distinction between C-1 and C-2 certainty. With respect to C-1 certainty, French remarks that it is different for things or events to be certain and for persons to be certain. “In the case of persons, to be certain (C-1) is to feel certain; though, conversely, feeling certain is not always being certain.” “‘I am certain of it’ (C-1) is not then the equivalent to ‘I know it.’” “‘I know it,’” he adds, usually means having appropriate grounds for what is said and having the responsibility of “getting it right.” “Being certain” (C-1) is compatible with being wrong. The present writer finds no difficulty with C-1 certainty; it has sometimes been called “psychological certainty.”

C-2 certainty is for this discussion the more important kind. C-1 certainty is “supported” by C-2 certainty. “C-2 certainty is only extraordinarily compatible with being wrong.” Ludwig Wittgenstein,

as French notes, maintained that C-2 "truisms" are not properly true at all. They are the very presuppositions of all of our judging, investigating, knowing, etc. C-2 propositions lie beyond "being justified or unjustified." French claims also that it is "inappropriate to confuse C-2 propositions with things we know." Does everyone share the same set of C-2 propositions? "C-2 propositions might best be described as *our* fundamental certainties." Then, significantly, French adds: "They are *my* certainties only insofar as I share this form-of-life. To a large extent my 'making certain' and my answering 'Why are you certain?' questions is dependent upon our acquiescence or tacit agreement with these fundamental certainties." C-2 certainties are described as "our epistemological mythology." They serve as "the scaffolding of our thought"; the sciences rest upon C-2 certainties. "The real challenge of psychical research is to the C-2 certainties of our form-of-life." C-2 certainties "set the boundaries of sense and mark off those enterprises we accept from those we adjudge to be half-witted or the entertainments of madmen." French asserts that C-2 certainties are not "intuitions." They are "best described as limiting propositions (rules of a sort) which are embedded in our language as its very condition of use."

What are some examples of C-2 certainties? French lists the following: "I am certain that I am alive," "I am certain that I have not existed on Earth for the full span of Earth's years," "I have a body," "I have certainly never been very far from the Earth's surface," "I have two hands," "Trees do not talk," etc. Some additional C-2 certainties, purportedly ones that make psychical research nonsensical, are also listed by French. They are: "Events cannot have effects before they themselves have happened," "Causation at a considerable distance in space in the absence of intermediate causes is not possible," "Events removed much in time (events in the past) cannot cause events in the present unless a sequence exists of other causes linking the first event to the eventual effect," "Each of us knows what another is experiencing only by either observing the other's behavior or by being told what he is experiencing," "One can't experience the future in the present," "Mental processes in a human subject cannot directly bring about effects in the events of the physical world without the agency of the subject's body," "Death is the end of life," and "All men are mortal." This second list is so well tailored to the declaration that sentences in parapsychology are nonsensical that one cannot help wondering if they came to be C-2 statements for this reason alone. How, in fact, does one identify C-2 statements? Is it because they cannot be called true or false, are not objects of knowledge, cannot be doubted, etc.? If those are the reasons, they are indistinguishable from the predicates that apply to the supposed nonsensical statements of parapsychology.

But for all of the epistemological importance attributed by French to C-2 certainties, they are not unchanging. They are not "forever fossilized in our form of life." The suggestion as to how such change occurs is found in French's statement, following Wittgenstein, that "it is as if some of our C-1 propositions have hardened into C-2's so that they form a channel for those propositions which are not hardened but fluid." In a later passage, French asserts:

" . . . we have maintained that our certainties, even of the C-2 variety, are not permanent fixtures. They do change . . . as the metaphor of the river and its bed suggests, there is shifting. . . . It is not usually dramatic; it is a slow process. Yet the nonsense of today's psychical research might well be the certainty of tomorrow's psychology and even eventually the certainty of our common linguistic heritage."

French then quickly adds that this is a "remote possibility."

The philosopher's function in all of this is to examine the disguised nonsense roundabout him and show it to be patent nonsense. This is what French believes himself to have done for sentences of psychical research.

Such is the view of French and his condemnation of parapsychology. His position is a formidable one and it doubtless reveals why the statements of parapsychologists are often ridiculed out of hand because they are, if French is right, in conflict with C-2 certainties, which are the very foundations of sense.

I do not agree with French's use of the term "certainty," as it appears in "C-2 certainty." To use the word "certainty" in that context is arbitrary and misleading, as I shall endeavor to show. It is also my belief that the distinction between C-1 knowing and what he calls "C-2 certainty" is much less determinate and far more fluid than he supposes.

Let a beginning be made by examining what I shall call his "first-person" C-2 certainties. He illustrates C-2 certainty with several first-person statements, as the list of his C-2's establishes. "I have two hands" is given by him as a C-2 certainty. I am prepared to argue either that his use of first-person examples forces him into a psychological linguistic relativism, which destroys the monolithic character he wishes language to display, or that he must abandon this view that first-person statements are C-2's.

"I have two hands" could very well be taken as a commonplace judgment embedded in French's language structure. Could this proposition, "I (French) have two hands" be a C-2 statement for me? I cannot say sensibly that "I (French) have two hands," simply because I

am not French. This is thus a judgment confined to French's language structure. The closest I can come to saying what French has said would be to say: "He (French) has two hands." To say, however, that I can assert this with the same degree of certainty, with which French can assert his first-person statement, is obviously wrong. I do not know French; I have never seen him; his statement in his book that he has two hands could be false. I do not want to say I can be certain about statements that, so far as I know, could be false. Of course, someone might say that French *really* means to say, when he says "I have two hands," is that "All people have two hands." I shall undertake to criticize this sort of claim later when I take an example of such a universal statement under consideration.

The result of this line of criticism is that these first-person statements, which he claims to be C-2's, are not inherent in the general language of all but are confined to the person asserting them. Even if we were to grant, for the sake of argument, that "He (French) has two hands" might become indubitable and a C-2 for the close associates of French, it would still be the case that such a C-2 would not be embedded in the language generally but only in the language of those who knew French well.

The end-product of this discussion is, as was suggested earlier, a psychological linguistic relativism, i.e., there is not a communal use of C-2's in the case of these first-person C-2's and not necessarily in the case of the third-person restatements of them either. There are then "language islands," so to speak, from which each of us approaches his world. For French to declare from his "language island" that the sentences about paranormal events are nonsensical is thus gratuitous. Only if the language structure were monolithic and immutable would French have the right to use it as a means to a categorical declaration that this or that statement in parapsychology is nonsensical.

French can avoid this psychological linguistic relativism only by denying that first-person statements are actually C-2 statements. He, of course, affirms just the opposite.

A further point to be noted is that one can trivialize the notion of C-2's by means of French's own example. If "I have two hands" is a C-2 certainty for me, then "I have ten toes," "I have ten fingers," "I have two nostrils," "I have two eyes," "I have one head," etc., are also C-2 statements, for they are of the same kind of statement as "I have two hands." Yet, C-2's have been declared by French to be the very foundation of knowledge and of science. This claim hardly holds water in the light of the possible multiplication of trivial examples. Being a C-2 would not necessarily cause it to have such a role as French assigns it. There must be some other properties that some C-2's have, when

they function importantly as a foundation of knowledge, that French has left unspecified.

Let us turn to another example of French's that will serve to make another point or two. Take his C-2 example: "I have never been very far from the Earth's surface." We can now ignore the "first-person" difficulties noted above. Let us assume with French, for purposes of the argument, that this is a C-2 certainty that has become embedded in the language structure. Edgar A. Mitchell, astronaut and parapsychologist, could both believe and know a C-1 proposition to the effect that "I (Mitchell) have certainly been very far from the earth's surface." If we imagine that space travel becomes commonplace in the future, this C-1 may in its fluidity serve to change the C-2 status of French's example. The new C-2 would have to be formulated, not as French has it, but (taking account of our earlier criticism of first-person statements) in a third-person universalized form, i.e., "One does not get very far from the earth's surface unless he uses some mechanical device, such as a space ship." It is hardly necessary to say that space travel was not so many years ago as much a wonderland notion as French finds psychical research today; it was only in the minds of science-fiction writers—nothing but fantasy and practical nonsense. Cannot one apply this Mitchell example to parapsychology? Can there not be "technological advance" in parapsychology such that numbers of persons may be taught telepathy, and use it? There are some parapsychologists who have created ESP teaching machines (e.g., Russell Targ), and they have had evidence that the use of such machines improves ESP performance. May not the C-2's that cause French today to declare sentences in parapsychology "nonsensical" have to be eliminated from the language structure under the pressures of C-1 knowledge that such researchers as Targ are providing? Happily, for this line of argument, French himself has said, as we saw, that "the nonsense of today's psychical research might well be the certainty of tomorrow's psychology and eventually the certainty of our common linguistic heritage." Even though he says this is a "remote possibility," one can say that so was space travel not very many years ago. Why then do philosophers such as French relate themselves to parapsychologists as they do, namely, by telling them what they are saying is nonsense? Since, on French's own statement, it is possible for parapsychological sentences to make sense, would it not be more helpful for philosophers to use their linguistic skills to assist in that direction?

Not all of French's C-2's are in a first-person form; some are generalized. It will be useful to examine such a C-2 instance, as was earlier suggested. As a case in point, let us take his C-2 statement that

"Each of us knows what another is experiencing by observing the other's behavior or by being told what he is experiencing." This C-2 is of course tailored to make statements about telepathy into nonsense. It is claimed by French to be indubitable in the sense that no one doubts it. I doubt it and many parapsychologists do. I doubt it because I do not believe it to be true and hence it is for me not certain. It begins "Each of us knows . . ." How can French possibly regard this statement as certain except in the C-1 sense of merely believing it or by means of some aberrant meaning of "certainty"? To say with certainty (in any commonsense or scientific use of the term "certainty") that "Each of us knows . . ." would require a complete enumeration of each and every living person with respect to this supposed knowledge—a perfect induction that neither French nor anyone else has made. It is a statement that is only "probable," and not certain, except in a psychological sense or in some aberrant sense of "certain." If it is corrigible, it follows that, under pressures from C-1 knowledge about telepathy, the C-2, "Each of us knows what another is experiencing only by observing the other's behavior or by being told what he is experiencing" may have to give way to a new C-2, namely, "Each of us knows what another is experiencing only by observing the other's behavior or by being told what he is experiencing or by telepathy."

If now a broad commonsense look is taken of French's view, it appears wrong on the face of it. Here is, let us say, a language with its C-2 certainties. It is a means of representing, more or less adequately, the actual world. It is analogous to a map which depicts in abbreviated fashion some part of the Earth's surface. It is not possible to say sensibly that a map is an ultimate criterion for what is in the world. It is rather the other way around; what is in the actual world is the criterion for what gets on the map more or less adequately. Why should French's language-map be used to make nonsensical what parapsychologists formulate about their empirical findings in the actual world by experimental work in the laboratory? One is reminded of the pre-Magellan days when it was doubtless for many a C-2 certainty that "The earth is flat." Philosophical analysts of that day, had they existed, would have affirmed solemnly that it is nonsensical to say that "The earth is round." One is also reminded of the professor of philosophy at Padua who, when invited to look through Galileo's telescope to view the satellites of Jupiter, refused to do so. He said:

"There are seven windows given to animals in the domicile of the head. . . From this and many other similarities in nature, such as the seven metals, etc., which it were tedious to enumerate, we gather that the number of planets is necessarily

seven. Moreover these (alleged) satellites of Jupiter are invisible to the naked eye, and therefore can exercise no influence on the earth, and therefore would be useless, and therefore do not exist. Besides (from the earliest times men) have adopted the division of the week into seven days, and have named them after the seven planets. Now if we increase the number of planets, this whole and beautiful system falls to the ground."<sup>2</sup>

A major point that French overlooks is that there are parapsychologists who do not talk nonsense. If one says, as Dr. Rao does, that "ESP is guessing with non-chance results," there is a clear operational way of saying when ESP has occurred. We know what guessing is and statistical methods enable the parapsychologist to know when he has got significant scores above or below chance. This procedure is perfectly compatible with modern scientific techniques. Or, take French's view that it is C-2 certain that a future event cannot be in the present. There have been theories of precognition proposed that do not violate this C-2 certainty (if it is that). Such theories do not place the future in the present any more than does an astronomer when he predicts an eclipse of the sun. Let it be admitted that some parapsychologists have made nonsensical statements, but so have many scientists and many, many philosophers. If French wishes to ascertain whether what parapsychologists do is worth doing, let him go to the laboratories of the parapsychologists, note their carefully controlled experiments, their methods of evaluation and their often positive results. How can one judge experimental parapsychology fairly by means of purely linguistic considerations? Perhaps there is a real wisdom in Alfred N. Whitehead's statement that "The history of thought shows that false interpretations of observed facts enter into the records of their observation. Thus both theory, and received notions as to fact, are in doubt."<sup>3</sup> The insight here is that we should be careful not to throw out the hard facts of parapsychology with the bathwater of the false interpretations.<sup>4</sup>

With these criticisms of French's position in mind, it is possible to move into the original purpose of this paper, which is that of showing how one can use parapsychology in the teaching of philosophy.

Epistemology or the theory of knowledge is a branch of philosophy and it is the title of academic courses in philosophy. A number of epistemologists in the past and present time have been interested in the nature of perception. They have elaborated complex theories of perception. All of them propose to explain the manner in which man directly knows his environment. Some of them have been sense-datum

theories in which sensing is made primary. One senses ineffable colors, sounds, tastes and the like. Perceiving, in such theories, requires sensing but in addition presupposes conceptual and memorial elements such that one "sees" a table or "hears" a train.

There are other theorists who are critical of sense-datum theories of perception. They may hold that one directly perceives such objects as stars, chairs, and tables. They view sense-data as the abstractions of analysts and not as actual participants in the perceptual process. Others may escape a sense-datum theory by an adverbial notion of sensing ("I see redly").

Whatever may be the variations in the philosophers' account of perceptual knowledge, there appears to be agreement among them that some form of sensory experience is a necessary ingredient. If one is to know objects and events in the environment, the sensory route is a necessary one.

But such a view will not do in the face of claims about extrasensory perception of objects or objective events. Spontaneous cases of clairvoyance are well-known and laboratory experiments have provided reasonable assurance of the reality of this ESP capacity. And clairvoyance reveals the striking fact that a percipient can know objects and objective events precisely without the use of the senses. The fact is that, in well-controlled laboratory experiments in clairvoyance, the experimenter will have done everything possible to exclude the use of the subject's sensing or perceiving in knowing the target. "Sensory leakage" and also inferential knowledge are carefully screened out of the experimental situation. It is true that in laboratory experimentation in ESP the subject does not necessarily know when a call is a hit; it might be claimed that he lacks knowledge of the objective fact in such a situation. In many spontaneous cases of clairvoyance and other forms of ESP, however, there is a breakthrough to the level of consciousness and an awareness that one has knowledge. Many instances of spontaneous clairvoyance testify to that fact.

The epistemologist, then, who sees some form of sensory experience as the only mode of knowing objects and events is apparently mistaken. The reason for his error is his neglect of clairvoyance, which is a non-sensory way of knowing objects and events. Here is a place where parapsychology obviously impinges on philosophy. Clairvoyance, as a way of perceiving, should become a datum for the theorizing of the epistemologist and this mode of knowing should be considered in courses in epistemology, even if only from a logical and critical point of view.

Another common epistemological assumption of philosophers is that it is impossible for Person A to know what Person B is experiencing



unless Person A perceives and interprets sensory signs of the experience which are produced by Person B, e.g., a verbal report on an experience by Person B, which Person A hears and interprets. Such a relationship, it is held, is basic to one's awareness of another's experience.

But telepathy is the extrasensory perception of a mental state or activity of another person. It is quite different from the way of knowing just described, even though both involve awareness of what goes on in another's experience. It is different because telepathy occurs without the mediation of a sensory vehicle, which is then interpreted. As with the case of clairvoyant laboratory experiments, so it is in the telepathic ones: the experimenter tries to provide sufficiently rigorous controls so as to insure that the target of telepathic cognition cannot have been known sensorially or inferentially by the subject. In his neglect of telepathy, the epistemologist fails to take into account a datum that is relevant to his theorizing, namely, a non-sensory mode of knowing another's mental state or activity.

It is also commonplace for the epistemologist to hold that one cannot predict future events except by use of data that one obtains directly or by testimony from others. By means of these data and by rules of inference relevant to them, future events can be predicted. Or, one may have a non-inferential anticipation or expectation of future events grounded on associations that had their roots in past experience and which are presently activated.

But this is not how precognition operates. Precognition is the prediction of future events whose occurrence is not inferred from present sensorial or testimonial data. Neither is it an anticipation of future events grounded on associations that had their roots in the past. Precognition is explicable in terms of neither the inferential nor the associative modes of knowing the future. It is knowledge of future events via a hunch, a vision, a dream or some other non-sensory psychic event, having no essential similarity to the common sense or scientific modes of knowing future events—modes which dominate the thinking of epistemologists.

Despite the evidences for belief in precognition, philosophers have generally neglected it. The conclusion to be drawn here is that philosophers, who are theorizing about "knowing" or teaching epistemology courses in which modes of knowing are relevant to their interests, might well turn some of their attention to precognition as a way of knowing future events.

Similar comments can be made about retrocognition, though parapsychologists themselves have given less attention to this mode of knowing past events. The usual view explanatory of knowledge of past

events is that such knowledge is dependent on memory or testimony grounded on memory, or it might be based on records of what has been perceived or of memories, or dependent on present data and relevant rules of sequence. But, again, retrocognition does not conform to these requirements of knowledge of past events so that the view mentioned just above is inadequate.

How can one explain this indifference of epistemologists to extrasensory modes of knowing? Many philosophers know practically nothing about the contributions of parapsychology. Others may have some slight knowledge of the field but they view it as a pseudo-science, not worthy of consideration. Others may refrain from relating parapsychology to philosophy for the reason that these four psi capacities, even granting that they exist, are so little understood that it is judged they can better be ignored. Only a few philosophers have considered them and have effectively related them to epistemological issues, e.g., Broad, Ducasse, Price, Scriven, and French.

The philosophy of religion is widely taught in American universities. Though this course can be presented in many different ways, a common approach is that of including in it such topics as the classical "proofs" for God's existence and evaluations of them, ostensible evidences for survival after bodily death, mysticism, the problem of evil, prayer, faith, alternatives to supernaturalistic religion, etc.

If one chooses to include in a philosophy of religion course the question of evidences for survival after bodily death, much use can be made of the contributions of parapsychology. Undergraduate students are usually acquainted with the idea of discarnate survival through religious training. Some of them will occasionally experiment with spirit communication and will succeed in getting messages from a deceased person, or so they believe. Dr. Ryzl and I attended such a student seance at San Jose State University in the recent past and the phenomena generated by these students were remarkable, even though their interpretation of them was naive. These facts are mentioned to show that, though spiritism would interest only a very few present-day parapsychologists, a discussion of it in a philosophy of religion class can be helpful for students. In fact, in the educational matrix, there is no reason why the instructor should not choose spontaneous cases from the remote past if they serve to provide striking instances useful to his classroom purposes. One can call the students' attention to such an unusual medium as Leonora Piper, who was a subject of study by William James from 1885 until his death in 1910, not to mention investigation of her by other eminent American and English researchers. A striking characteristic of her work was the paranormal information she provided under conditions that would

make deception practically impossible. Was she obtaining this information from a spirit or was it coming from living persons by means of ESP? This question serves the function of leading students to serious consideration of the ESP hypothesis as, in fact, it led J. B. Rhine and many other parapsychologists from studies of spirit communication to investigations of ESP. One can thus duplicate the historical movement of psychical research in the classroom.

But spiritism is also a useful springboard in a philosophy of religion class for a variety of topics relevant to the question of discarnate survival. Spiritism presupposes the existence of discarnate beings. An obvious question is: can a "soul" or "mind" exist without its body? Is this even a thinkable notion? Such questions can be the opening for a consideration of the body-mind problem. They lead naturally to an examination of a number of body-mind theories such as the Identity theory, Epiphenomenalism, Psycho-physical parallelism, Hypo-phenomenalism, and Interactionist dualism. The student will learn that some of these theories entail the impossibility of a "mind" surviving the destruction of its body and that others leave open this possibility. That each of these theories has had its ardent adherents causes the student to realize that the answer to the question of discarnate survival is not likely to be simple. He will finally realize probably that at the present time no rational solution is possible.

But one can also focus attention on what parapsychology, independently of spiritism, can contribute to a solution of the body-mind problem and that of survival in a discarnate form. One can turn to a variety of spontaneous cases found in the history of parapsychology, examine them and raise questions of their bearing on both the body-mind problem and discarnate survival. Through this approach, the student learns something more about the philosophical issues at hand but also about the sorts of cases that have interested parapsychologists.

Poltergeist cases have been alleged to provide evidence for a discarnate mind's existence, e.g., as recounted in Bishop Pike's book, *The Other Side*.<sup>5</sup> Those familiar with this book will recall that the Bishop, while on a sabbatical leave at Cambridge University and after his son's death in New York City, experienced in the presence of two friends who were staying with him in his apartment a series of events of a poltergeist nature. Some of them were of such a character that they pointed to his son as a cause, or so the Bishop believed. Was his son's discarnate mind the cause of these unusual events or were these physical disturbances caused psychokinetically by living persons? In answering this question, one can point out to students why most parapsychologists would favor the latter hypothesis.

Out-of-the-body experiences or bilocation are *prima facie* relevant to the body-mind problem as well as to discarnate survival. In such cases, the experient-mind seems to be able to leave its body. More than that, this mind is on occasion able to "bring back" paranormal knowledge. If one's mind can leave one's body, as such experiences suggest, there appears to be in that fact a solution to the body-mind problem. The mind is apparently capable of existing independently of its body. A dualism is suggested as the correct body-mind theory. And, if the mind can leave its body while the body is alive, why cannot it leave it at the death of that body and survive independently of it? Unfortunately for this view, the experience of being out of one's body may be an hallucination and the paranormal knowledge that sometimes occurs explicable in terms of clairvoyance or some other ESP capacity. The preference of most parapsychologists for this latter explanation can be indicated to students.

Apparitions of deceased persons suggest discarnate survival, especially in such cases as that of Mrs. George Butler.<sup>6</sup> After her death, "she" returned to her village near Machiasport, Maine, in the form of a phantom. She was seen a number of times over a period of three months by some one hundred persons, including her husband, in groups as large as forty. She gave long discourses and accurately predicted births and deaths in the community. On one occasion, Captain Butler passed his hand through the apparition as though its body were made of light. All of this is based on thirty affidavits collected by a witness, Rev. Abraham Cummings, which he published in a now rare pamphlet, *Immortality Proved by the Testimony of Sense* (1826). It would appear that there is in this case a strong suggestion that a discarnate mind, that of Mrs. Butler, revealed itself through an apparition. The events recorded suggest a body-mind dualism and discarnate survival. Classroom discussion can readily center about such a puzzling case.

Is it possible to explain these events on an ESP hypothesis? The one hundred or so persons who heard Mrs. Butler's discourses and predictions must have heard them clairaudiently, for the phantasm was proved to be without physical substance. The phantasm was seen collectively, i.e., by groups as large as forty. Paranormal information was forthcoming from the apparition. If one tries to explain these events by reference to the living, a very far-out hypothesis is needed. G. N. M. Tyrrell, in his book on apparitions,<sup>7</sup> has pointed out that "collective" apparitions do occur with some frequency. There were also in this Butler case "collective" clairaudient hearings, not to mention the paranormal predictions. The continuation of these sorts of events over a period of three months adds to the strain on credibility. What causal

factors among the living could have accounted for these visual and auditory hallucinations that were collectively experienced? What causal factors in these many villagers led to the paranormal knowledge? To explain these events by reference to the living would call for a super-ESP hypothesis. Whether one would explain such a case by means of a discarnate survival hypothesis or by reference to living persons would seem more a matter of the theorist's predisposition than a matter of evidential coercion. This Butler case is nonetheless relevant to the survival issue and its consideration can bring to students in a philosophy of religion class some idea of the complexity of the problem.

There are other categories of spontaneous cases, e.g., "possessions" and death-bed visions, that can be used in a philosophy of religion course in an instructive way. The contributions of parapsychology can thus merge with those of philosophy at the points of impingement noted. *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*<sup>8</sup> by Ian Stevenson can well serve to introduce the philosophy of religion student to his recent investigations. The definition of reincarnation provided by Stevenson raises questions about the body-mind problem in a somewhat different context. His cases raise also the question of an ESP hypothesis as an alternative to that of reincarnation.

Much of the foregoing discussion has involved the notion of a disembodied mind. Is this idea unthinkable, as some have claimed? Professor H. H. Price asserted that it is a conceivable notion and says why he believes that in his article, "Survival and the Idea of 'Another World'".<sup>9</sup>

The problems of both discarnate survival and reincarnation raise for the philosopher (metaphysician) the question of *personal identity*. How can an investigator of the survival problem be assured that a supposed communicating mind is the same mind as that of the once living person whose mind it is *prima facie* supposed to be? Bodily identity through time will not work, for the discarnate mind is without a body. Neither will it work for reincarnation in that there is not continuity of the same body in reincarnation. It would appear that the personal identity would in both cases require some kind of mental continuity, e.g., possibly memory continuity. Stevenson depends partly on memory continuity in the cases he cites. Besides this problem of personal identity, there is also for the metaphysician the problem of a mind's nature. Is there indeed a mind, or is there only a brain? If there is a mind, how would it be described? These are profound philosophical issues.

Mysticism is frequently included as part of the content of a philosophy of religion course. In such an experience as the religious

mystic has, he believes himself to be one with a transcendental being, which may be a personal, an impersonal or a superpersonal entity. William James held that there are four traits that generally characterize mystical experiences: (1) ineffability, i.e., the mystic cannot really describe his experience; (2) transiency, i.e., the brevity of the experience; (3) passivity, i.e., though the mystic may actively seek the experience, he is passive during it; and (4) a noetic quality, i.e. the experience will often bring an illumination, an insight or knowledge. Only the noetic quality will concern us here.

Dr. R. M. Bucke described his own mystical illumination in the third person. He wrote: "He (Bucke) claims that he learned more within the few seconds during which the illumination lasted than in previous months or even years of study, and he learned much that no study could ever have taught."<sup>10</sup>

How does one explain such an illumination? It could have originated within himself, or he may have obtained this mystical knowledge from other living persons by ESP or it may have originated in the transcendental being with whom he felt united. On this latter hypothesis, paranormal modes of knowing also suggest themselves.

Sir Alister Hardy, in his article, "Anthropology, Parapsychology and Religion,"<sup>11</sup> offers support for the latter view. He asserts:

"If we can get cast-iron evidence that one mind can communicate with another by other than physical means it will at once bring about a revolution in present-day ideas of the mind-brain relationship. It would at once lend plausibility to the possibility that the influence which religious people feel when they say they are in touch with what seems to them to be some transcendental element—a power that affects their lives, whether they call it God or not—may be something within the same field as extrasensory telepathic communication. Could it perhaps be . . . that the element that is at the back of all religion might be some extrasensory shared spiritual experience; perhaps some source of spiritual 'know-how' which may be tapped by those who may have discovered or learnt the way of making rapport with it . . ."

If Hardy's speculation is sound, one can fit much that goes on in religion into it. Religious mysticism finds a ready place within his belief and it can be viewed as an ESP phenomenon, especially with respect to the noetic quality it frequently displays. If one conceives of prayer as communication between a human being and God, such communication becomes intelligible only on an ESP hypothesis—at least if the

usual spiritual nature of God is accepted. There are also intercessory prayers in which one prays in behalf of a sick relative or friend. Even if there is no God, such prayers, being the product of a wish and volition, might thereby bring about unorthodox healings by psychokinetic means. How will God answer prayers if He chooses to do so? If the answers were in the form of advice or admonitions, communication could be by ESP means. To the extent that an answer required some action by God in the devotee's body or in the physical world, psychokinetic action would serve His intention. Much in religion can be subsumed under an ESP-PK hypothesis. Prophetic dreams and utterances can be viewed as precognitions. The walking on the water by Jesus (levitation), his unorthodox healings (psychokinesis), his being seen after his crucifixion and burial (apparitions), his foreknowledge of his betrayal by Judas (precognition), etc. can be explained, at least speculatively, by means of the concepts of parapsychology. If the alternative is leaving them as incomprehensible miracles, one can see some advantage in thinking of them in terms of Sir Alister Hardy's speculation.

Causation and its nature have been of interest to philosophers (metaphysicians, epistemologists and ethicists) from ancient times down to the present. Parapsychology offers in this area some puzzling facts and theories that ought to interest philosophers concerned with the cause-effect relation.

Psychokinesis is itself a puzzling phenomenon. How mind can interact with body *within* the human being, e.g., wanting to raise one's arm as a causal condition of it being raised, is a difficult enough problem. Psychokinesis, however, presents the far more difficult one of knowing how a mind can directly move or otherwise influence objects *outside* of its body, e.g., influence the fall of dice. A great many philosophers would consider this kind of psycho-physical causation an impossibility, usually without looking at the evidences for it. If it exists, however, there are philosophical implications of significance. One of them is that a physicalist view of nature must be abandoned and some place provided for a nonphysical causal intervention in the course of nature. A second form of energy has been suggested by some parapsychologists in order to explain psychokinesis.

Precognition also presents a philosophic challenge to those who would understand causation. J. G. Pratt asserts that precognition is "a direct perception of a future event which is beyond the reach of inference or which is not brought about to fulfill the prediction."<sup>12</sup> If, as Pratt says, precognition is direct and does not depend upon inference from present or past remembered data or recorded data, and if the

precognized event is not intentionally brought about to fulfill the prediction, then it would appear that the future event itself is left as the only conceivable cause of the precognition. This appears to be the reasoning of E. Douglas Dean when he asserts:

“ . . . in the precognition case, there is involved a further test of logic—where logic breaks down completely. This occurs in the fact that someone gets information from the future. Thus, instead of a cause preceding the effect, it seems that the effect precedes the cause. Logic has broken down— . . . Effects coming before causes are not forbidden in nature; they are only forbidden in our brains, which work with logic circuits composed of neurons like computer logic circuits. Thus, we should not flinch . . . to use breakdowns of logic if they explain precognition.”<sup>13</sup>

Dean's view of precognition is philosophically a startling one. It has been taken as axiomatic by philosophers that a cause must temporally precede its effect. But Dean's view is that man's brain, limited in its structure, is incapable, in some instances at least, of understanding nature, i.e., when nature is not in line with the brain's "circuitry." Interesting epistemological and metaphysical problems are raised by the position he takes. Here are some puzzles calling for a solution. Can Dean's view be avoided by a new theory of time, say, a multi-dimensional concept of it? Can one avoid it by the concept of the "eternal now" along with a theory of how the "specious present" operates at an unconscious level? Is there some way of saving the causal relation from Dean's view of it and reconstituting the view that a cause is necessarily prior to its effect? Dean's view seems to imply either (1) that a future event, which does not now exist, can be a cause, which raises the question of how something that does not exist can do anything at all; or (2) that a future event does have some kind of existence now in that it can presently function as a cause of a precognition. This is probably Dean's view. It would then be interesting to know in what sense he would hold that a future event does have some kind of existence now. His view poses a whole host of philosophical issues.

There are doubtless other uses for parapsychology in the teaching of philosophy, but those mentioned in this paper will show that teachers of philosophy would do well to know something about parapsychology, both because of the purely philosophical issues concerning its nature and the knowledge that it can add to the content of courses in philosophy.



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- <sup>4</sup> I am much indebted to my friend and colleague, Professor Whitaker T. Deinger, who discussed at length with me the issues taken up in the above section of this paper. He has no responsibility, of course, for any errors that are there.
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- <sup>12</sup> *Parapsychology, An Insider's View*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964. P. 167.
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## DISCUSSION

RAO: I think we are all indebted to Dr. Dommeyer for his very fine presentation and excellent focusing of the topics involved. Certainly this has aroused my dormant interest in the things he's talking about. Dr. Dommeyer is a favorite person around here and I was hoping to find some disagreements with him, but I didn't succeed. I am not going to give up. For there can't be a better person to disagree with than Dr. Dommeyer.

Now, I do not see anything in what French is talking about that is very startling or new. These things are being said time and again by a number of people. Several psychologists expressed their opposition to psi research for almost the same reason. What French now calls the C-2 statements are what Broad described many years before as "the basic limiting principles." I cannot accept the view that the key parapsychological statements are sensical but perhaps false. I believe, on the contrary, they are perhaps nonsensical but essentially true. Whether something is sensical or nonsensical, it seems to me, is a function of one's frame of reference. I have no doubt that within the frame of reference of Mr. French the parapsychological statements are nonsensical. I myself feel that a good many of parapsychological

findings make no sense. But the evidence is so overwhelming, I accept them as true even if they do not make sense to me. On the other hand, what makes sense need not necessarily be true. The primitive man accepted the existence of the spirits. So they became sensical to them even if false. It seems to me, therefore, the main difficulty with people like French who attempt to clarify for us the meaning of concepts is that they themselves end up confusing their own limiting frames of reference with reality as it essentially is.

DOMMEYER: Thank you for your comments, Dr. Rao. I would respond to them this way. I believe we have an ambiguity here with the word "nonsensical." I would take it in the strict meaning of making no sense from the standpoint of asserting or not asserting a proposition. In other words, I would say any proposition is true or false. We would say in a two-valued logic that any proposition has to be true or false. If it is a genuine proposition, it then makes sense. Now there is another meaning of nonsensical which I think is the one you were utilizing: that in your frame of reference, psychologically, a proposition might be true and yet nonsensical. I would say a true proposition cannot in my use of the term "nonsensical" be nonsensical, because to be true, it has to make sense. You wouldn't know it was true unless it did make sense. Now it might be nonsensical in a second meaning of the term—say that it's fantastic. I'm not accustomed to accepting this truth; it's esoteric, etc., but if it's a true proposition or a false proposition, it seems to me that in my use of the term "nonsensical," and "sensical," that it has to have sense; otherwise we wouldn't know it to be true or false. That's the reason I would say in my use of the term "nonsensical" here, I would have to disagree with you that something could be nonsensical and true at the same time. So I think we have an ambiguity there, but I do thank you for your comment.

TART: French's comments remind me that too many philosophers have been talking so long that they mistake *talking* about reality for reality. What French seems to be saying with his C-2 statement is something we already know—that people make assumptions, and those assumptions tend to become implicit and not questioned at all. So when French says "Parapsychological phenomena are nonsensical," he's making a statement about *his* mind—he can't grasp them. But that doesn't have anything to do with whether that statement makes any sense about the real world or not.

Now, it was Korzybski who gave us the famous statement that "the map is not the territory." I find in my own experience that while that statement is true, it's not descriptive of most of our actual thinking. For

most of us, we prefer the map and give it much more reality than the territory. This is frequently even true in science. We don't really care about the territory. There are untold millions of facts that, in a sense, nobody cares about. There are three hundred thousand four hundred sixty-two cars in San Francisco at the moment, so what? We care about the facts, the data as they aid our *understanding*, so science is really a map-making business. The thing that saves science from going off into nonsensical things is the requirement that you constantly check your map back against the territory. If you've drawn a wonderful map and it says you can get from here to there, you have to try actually *going* from here to there; if it doesn't work, that's too bad for your map.

The philosopher has a lot to tell us about our logic system. What are the assumptions we've made explicitly; what are the hidden assumptions that go along with that, and are we using that system accurately? But this requirement of always checking our conceptual system back against the territory is where I differ with French, and what I think gives science its unusual power. Make up any conceptual system you want. Use it logically: there's no point in saying one and one equals three if you're trying to prove a point unless you want to come up with a very different mathematical system. But constantly check it back against reality. I think French is just telling us about his own limitations and they have nothing to do with the territory, with reality.

DOMMEYER: Thank you, Charles. I have no disagreement with anything you say, and I think that is so—that what we have here is a language system which just happens to have embedded in it a certain body of limiting principles, if you will, and the fact that this exists within the language system entails nothing about what the real world is.

TART: In fact, Fred, sometimes instead of talking about paranormal phenomena, I've simply called them "paraconceptual" phenomena.

DOMMEYER: Sure. I agree wholly with you, Charles.

ROGO: I just have one quick question about the book. When it first came out, I thumbed through it, and it is an anthology, is it not?

DOMMEYER: Yes, it's a collection.

ROGO: And it seems to me that the contributions that cover parapsychology, cover it quite favorably. I was wondering how French comes to grips with many eminent philosophers whose works are included in the volume and are quite favorable to parapsychology and its assumptions.

DOMMEYER: Well, of course, Dr. Rhine had a selection in the volume

at the end of it, for which I was very happy, so you're quite right in suggesting that the book does include people who are not unfavorable to parapsychology. I think we do have to credit French with that degree of fairness. Indeed, French sets up a criterion that he obviously doesn't follow. The criterion that he sets up is that he is going to include authors who are of a philosophical analytic persuasion. In other words, linguistic philosophers, but it's obvious that he doesn't stay with that formula because I certainly don't think Dr. Rhine would fit into the category of being one of these philosophical analysts, for which I'm very happy. So I think French was quite fair, indeed. I have more complaint over the book in terms of its demeaning title and some of the things of that sort. "Philosophers in Wonderland." You see, the "Wonderland" is the land of psychical research and it's a demeaning title, and actually it's a bad title as I'm going to point out in my review, because he has a lot of philosophers with their selections in here and they don't go into the "Wonderland" at all. They're just papers that he took out of the journals of philosophy on dreaming, etc., and these fellows . . . well, take O. K. Bouwsma, at the University of Nebraska. There's a paper here by Bouwsma, who is one of these ordinary language people, and I don't think Bouwsma ever got into "Wonderland," and I don't think he even knows that this "Wonderland of Psychical Research" is around to enter. So it's just a faulty title, and I think the book would have been so much better had it not had all of these implications of this demeaning sort. Actually, the papers in the book are excellent; they're good papers. They're very thought-provoking papers, even though some of them don't seem to me to be on the topic of psychical research at all, and as I have indicated, never get into "Wonderland," but are just purely philosophical papers. There's only one paper I thought perhaps should not have been there, and that was the paper that was in the same section as Dr. Rhine's. There was a paper by George Price. And he pens a little note after some asterisks, that he really essentially libels parapsychology, except that he phrased it in such a way that the law couldn't get at him. When the author now, many years later, admits this fact, I don't see that that paper should have been included at all, because it was certainly written from motivations, it seems to me, that seem to be totally out of harmony with what we would expect such a book to have in it.

KRIPPNER: Well, I also would like to pick up on some points in French's Introduction, and I wish that French were here so he'd know about all the time we're spending on his book. Certainly, Dr. Dommeyer has cut through a lot of the problems in that Introduction when he differentiates between nonsensical statements and sensical statements on the one hand, and true statements and false statements

on the other hand. I see an additional problem with French in that he apparently is not really acquainted with types of logic systems that one gets into in altered states of consciousness or in other cultures. What is nonsense in ordinary consciousness could be completely different if he were having a dream, if he were stoned, if he were tripping, if he were meditating, if he were making love, or if he were in the middle of a desert or a forest. Then it might be clear to him that an effect could come before a cause. Or as an alternative, he might go to a different cultural system and visit people in some of the back mountain passes of Nepal whose religious system doesn't foster the type of causality that we hold, or he might go among the Hopi Indians or certain other indigenous tribes, and he might find a logic system that presents different cause-effect relations in perfectly sensible terms.

DOMMEYER: Thank you for your very good comments. I think everything you said certainly holds, and it again reveals what one might call the provincial position that he takes—that somehow or other since his linguistic system has such embedded C-2 statements as those he mentions, this must be the criterion in terms of which all reality is to be sketched out. It could well be the case—I don't know from my own personal knowledge—but it could well be the case that another culture might have a language system that would not have very many of these C-2 statements or even necessarily any of those C-2 statements he mentions at all. And yet he has this linguistic orientation, provincial linguistic orientation, by means of which he categorically states that parapsychology is nonsense, and I agree wholly with what you've said and I thank you.

CHILD: In agreement with the other comments, I find Dr. Dommeyer's suggestions about the role of parapsychology in philosophy far more constructive than the opinions of Dr. French's that he cites. In case the argument against Dr. French's position is worth pursuing for the sake of the role of parapsychology in philosophy, I'd like to add a couple of other ways of countering his position that I think are in agreement with what several others have said. French seems to me extremely ethnocentric and apparently unaware of the fact. His reasoning appears to be dominated by assumptions of a small subgroup within our society, and he naively generalizes it without justification. As I understand his reference to "linguistic system," it seems to be a gross misuse; it seems to imply that there is something in the English language that makes it reasonable to call some statements nonsensical. It seems to me it's not in the language, but in the particular set of beliefs expressed in this language by him and certain of his peers. I wouldn't be surprised if some of the

things he calls C-2 statements would actually be disagreed with by a majority of speakers of English; I think his argument does not proceed from the language itself, but only from what he and some of his fellows say in that language.

It might be constructive to point out, too, that while his statements apparently have the trappings of an intellectual discussion, they seem actually to be an extreme example of magic. He is wrapped up in the use of words and purports to dictate what reality is on the basis of his own utterances which is exactly what a traditional magician is trying to do.

DOMMEYER: Thank you for your comment. I would just make this point in agreement with you, Dr. Child. It seems to me also that one might regard some of his so-called C-2 statements as questionable. For example, though I don't think I quoted it here—he regards as a C-2 statement the proposition that all men are mortal. Now if one were to think of medieval times or possibly some time when religion was very dominant, it might very well have been the case that his C-2 statement of that time or culture might have been that “all men are immortal.”

CHILD: It was not many years ago that a senator, I believe, said that Eleanor Roosevelt was unfit to represent the United States at the United Nations, because in her magazine column she implied some doubt about personal immortality.

BELOFF: It was recently my privilege to spend a morning talking to a distinguished Oxford philosopher who is very much in the central tradition of Oxford analytical philosophy. He had never given any thought to parapsychology until he woke up one morning to find that first his young daughter and then his young son, were starting to produce “Geller-type” phenomena. He now has a completely different attitude. He doesn't quite know what to do with it philosophically, yet. I think that like Dr. Franklin, he is rather hoping that the quantum physicists will sort of come to his rescue and make some sort of sense of it in physical terms. But to me it illustrated beautifully what Dr. Tart was saying, that reality can be stronger than talking about reality.

MORRIS: I just wanted to remind you that in the seventeen hundreds at a meeting of scientists, Lavoisier made the statement that meteorites could not exist because there were no rocks in the sky; everybody knew that, so it was not possible for rocks to fall from the sky.

FRANKLIN: A couple of comments on the pitfall of causality. I got interested in the field of parapsychology a few years ago and found out

from my reading that causality itself is not a fundamental pillar of physics. I was a bit shocked by that because most of my background had indicated causality was necessary, but since the introduction of quantum mechanics, of course, the uncertainty principle has given rise to the breakdown of the principle of causality and has had proofs in physics' journals as late as 1972. People here at Berkeley did experiments which prove that causality is not a fundamental pillar of physics. Another interesting thing is that the fundamental pillars which we seem to espouse in physics, and others have adopted, such as conservation of mass—energy, evidently is not a fundamental pillar of physics in curved space.

If you look back at the paradigms of physics, curvature of space was introduced by Einstein and there were tremendous traumas introduced in philosophical thinking at that time as to why space and time should be connected. As for parapsychological phenomena, if we go now to five dimensions, and some thinkers are progressing that way, try to characterize a fifth dimension as being different from space and time. Then I assume that will also introduce some very intricate problems to explain. With respect to the fundamental ideas in physics, I think it's important at this stage to try to maintain a close contact with *modern* theoretical physics thought, rather than stuff that is thirty or forty years old in this regard.

DOMMEYER: Thank you for your comments.

RHINE: There is a question that I have often been asked in the years since George Price wrote his apology in *Science* regarding his earlier article criticizing the work in ESP back in 1955. People asked why Price changed his mind. Why did he feel like apologizing? Price has added to this paper, as it appears now in French's book, a good bit of information which he had written me years ago, but he had written it in confidence. He wanted to save it until he got a certain article written giving a fuller explanation, and that has never happened. But this explanation is here and it seemed to me that it might serve to illustrate one of the points under discussion here. It seems to me, that as an explanation, it is neither true nor false; I am just not able to make sense of it.

DOMMEYER: I might just read this little statement if you would be interested. George Price says, "My paper is extremely unfair to J. B. Rhine and S. T. Soal, because I simply assumed, without making any slight attempt to find evidence to support my assumption, that they had faked ESP results for the purpose of promoting Christianity, and I suggested this in a way that made clear what I meant while cleverly

avoiding libel. During correspondence with Rhine in 1971, it became obvious to me that he really was, after all, concerned with the scientific question of whether ESP occurs, and not at all seeking to promote religious beliefs through fraud. Undoubtedly the same is true of Soal, and as for the question asked by several correspondents whether I now believe that ESP occurs, I'm afraid the answer is that I have myself become guilty of accepting and trying to follow, in a rather radical way, that strange system of beliefs that I accused Rhine and Soal of trying to promote, and consequently I now believe in much worse things than ESP."

TART: Two brief comments. One on the Price article. I was very angry about that article at the time it came out, but in the years since, I've actually come to appreciate it. Here is a man who simply said, "I know what reality is and no amount of evidence will make me change my mind, so phooey on you." At least he's being very honest about his prejudices.

On promoting philosophy teaching through parapsychology, I think this is exceptionally valuable. As a psychologist, and especially looking at altered states of consciousness, I've become more and more overwhelmed by the degree to which people's mental functioning is limited by their belief system, and the degree to which the belief system is usually used very sloppily. We like to believe that our ordinary state is rational, but I think it's primarily rationalizing. So philosophy has something to teach us about actually being rational instead of just pretending to be. But even more important, parapsychological data provide a splendid example of how a conceptual system that we've come to believe in simply cannot handle certain kinds of data, and it could be used to illustrate to people how much we need to be careful not to mistake our conceptual system for what's out there.