

ON THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY

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Psychological Reflection

As you know I come from psychology. Psychologists have long been interested in their "para" cousin; the early modern naming of the field brought *psyche* into it from the beginning, e.g., "psychical research." William James, William McDougall, C. A. Mace, Cyril Burt, Gardner Murphy, as well as Freud and Jung are representatives of psychology whose work in the parapsychological field is well known. To extend the list would make only more evident the omissions.

Despite this long-standing interest of psychology in psychic research and the eminence of its bearers, psychology has mainly made contributions of only two sorts: operational and critical. It has suggested methods and provided accounts for operations of different kinds, and it has thought critically about many areas of parapsychology in relation with the psyche as studied by psychology. There is an approach, however, which psychology has not to my knowledge yet made, and it is in this direction I would like to venture this morning.

It has seemed to me that psychology could make a deeper contribution were it to approach the field from the perspective of depth psychology. Let me at once hasten to add that I do *not* mean another theory based on a "subliminal self," an unconscious mind, an autonomous complex, an oversoul, or psychic energy, etc. I do not mean to provide another account for ESP events by means of the conceptual apparatus of depth psychology. Nor shall I begin an analysis of a psi-factor, or personality correlates with psi-behavior, or any of the psychological or psychologizing approaches to our problems. There is no reason to insist that the conceptual apparatus of depth psychology can be applied to events other than the ones of psychotherapy, nor even that our apparatus is so valid and so valuable that it should be applied in other areas. Rather, there is reason to believe, as Ian Stevenson has suggested, that parapsychology may be useful for "accounting for" phenomena of therapy. Here I refer to transference and also to the possibility that complexes may account for psi events, but perhaps psi events

may help account for an "ancestral" factor in complexes. Perhaps the things so hard to shed are residues of other lives? So I would prefer to begin a process of reflection upon parapsychology itself, rather than upon its disparate phenomena. Could we examine the psychology of the *field* and not only the psychology of the mediums, the gifted, the experimenters, and so on.

Depth psychology has applied its method to the study of alchemy, myth, religious dogma and ritual, scientific theory, primitive behavior, cosmologies, psychiatric ideas—all in terms of the archetypal fantasy therein contained and expressed. All fields work with certain models of thought or root metaphors; so too parapsychology must have root metaphors. If this conference has been called in order to review the continuing doubts and affirmations about psychical research, then it might be useful to reflect upon the psychic impetus of the field—not what are its problems, but what are its fantasies, what is its dream?

Problems and Fantasies

I have made a distinction between not being interested in the problems of psychical research and being interested in its fantasies. Let me make this clearer. Psychic life is a complexity. We can imagine this complexity as a group of complexes. Following Jung we can take these complexes to be the root of all psychic life, the nuclear fundamentals. We are each a multiplicity of voices speaking from a multiplicity of souls, and Jung refers to these complexes as "the little people." They populate our dreams, create the dissociation and internal conflicts, and give us our problems.

A complex can be taken from two sides: one is the realm of problems and the other that of fantasies. When a complex is experienced from its problematic side, it becomes a knot, a worry, a discord of complexities demanding resolution. It pushes itself into life, infects and dominates the psyche, accumulates associations, demands to be fed by attention, perseveres against our will. All these factors are familiar from the descriptions of psychology and the evidence gained through the association experiments. On the other hand, the complex is also a fantasy; it figures in our dreams as themes and personages, building hopes, illusions, depressions, projects. It fabulates tales and makes myths, playing us into all sorts of roles, making life quite exciting, and "unreal." These fantasies are like a procession of images and leitmotifs governed ultimately by basic archetypal patterns.

Usually we speak of the two sides of the complex as the "real" and "unreal" sides; problems being "real," "hard," "tough," "difficult," while fantasies are only fantasies, mere, wispy, insubstantial nonsenses.

Problems call for strong men to attack them, for hard-thinking, and tough-mindedness. Parapsychology, like all respectable, serious fields, is full of "thorny" and "knotty" problems. The word problem is rooted etymologically in the idea of a hindrance, barrier, blockage, connected with armor and shield. It is something that juts out, getting in the way. So, problems are to be overcome, penetrated, knocked down and solved, got rid of. Problems appear in the realm of math and logic, of chess, physics, and also war and logistics. Problems belong to the fantasies of will and thinking and our usual notion of the ego as copier, problem-solver.

Quite possibly those fantasies which we take most concretely and unpsychologically, which we endow with the most "reality" become problems. The obdurate fantasies that jut forth and annoy us—as complexes tend to do—become problems to solve. In this sense, we might say that every problem is just one more fantasy that has become hardened into an object or objection for the ego to deal with. A problem would be that fantasy to which the complex has diverted the most energy, paid the most attention, given the most credit, love and will. The complex believes in its problem and takes it seriously. In general we believe more in problems than fantasies. If the psychological therapy I am suggesting for our field of parapsychology is to have effect, a first step would be in regarding our problems as stages of fantasy, in recognizing the fantasy aspect of the problems, and remembering that we tend to perceive fantasy first in the hard-shell of problems, where it juts forward into our attention.

Fantasies are no less valid, real or serious than problems; by resolving problems into fantasies, searching for their archetypal sense so as to dissolve them rather than solve them, we do not mean that the continuing problems of parapsychology are not real. Nevertheless, I do suggest that they could be approached more psychologically, not only as persistently continuing problems, but also as *recurrent fantasies inherent to the field and part of the complexes which make up the field*—and therefore necessary to the existence of the field. In other words, the problems of parapsychology refer to fantasies, which in turn reflect the basic archetypal dominant which drives and governs our subject.

The Fantasies of Parapsychology

By turning now to these problems, and regarding them as fantasies, we may discover certain archetypal motives operating in parapsychology, which, until they become recognized as such, may be responsible for the continuing dissatisfaction with the results in the realm of problem-solving. Since problem-solving itself is a favorite fantasy of the

operating, striving ego, sometimes its *raison d'être*, there is a great investment in defending these problems as legitimate, real and tough, and calling for heroic work.

So, the first of the fantasies I wish to single out is that of work. Often and again papers in psychic research end with an exhortation for more work. We need larger samples, more laboratory experiments, more trained workers, more pedestrian day-to-day collections, more follow-up studies over a longer period of time, more down-to-earth work. ESP workers in the field, grubbers; a kind of peasant fantasy. There is a lurking hope that spontaneous and playful events, ephemeral, odd and fantastic, reported as anecdotes and cases could be caught by more "work," thereby disciplined into an order, made to obey law, become habitual and regular, able to be displayed in public demonstration, and thus become respectable within a certain ethical universe called rational or scientific. The playful to be caged by the serious, the spontaneous by the systematic.

Correlate with the fantasy of work is that of will. ESP events are generally not only extrasensory, but extra-voluntary. We generally seem unable to make them happen. Could we, then we would have them under control and predictable. The fantasy of will is quite a strong one; it enters into the core of the idea of personality. When Lodge leaves a packet behind, the contents of which he alone knows, it is with the post-mortal will that he will try to communicate to the living; T. E. Wood intends the same, by communicating after death the code to a cipher he has printed. To what extent the identification of personality with conative-cognitive aspects of what we call the ego affects parapsychology's fantasies in most of its problems, I leave in order to pass on to other fantasies. Yet, it is hard to align the fantasy of willing psi events with the heaps of events that are so apparently un-willed, i.e., repetitive, automatic, undirected.

A fantasy of will appears in the experiments of mind over matter. PK presents this fantasy most acutely, but so does the healing of wounds or the growth of seedlings. Not only can willing and thinking make something occur, but the concentration of mental stuff through the focus of the operator can perform work and move matter. In psychoanalytic language this might be called an omnipotence fantasy; in psychiatry, de-reistic or delusional; in anthropology, magical or prelogical thinking. But let us not insist on those terms for putting down this fantasy. These negative descriptions, like omnipotence fantasy and magical thinking, are taken from the rational viewpoint of the last century when psychoanalysis, psychiatry and anthropology invented their terms, so loaded with nineteenth-century bias. We need not go on describing this fantasy in that language. However we account for it, the

idea of *mind over matter* remains a basic idea which parapsychology seems to have an interest in confirming. Unfortunately this belief is expressed in causal, concrete experiments, the fantasy in the hard shell of psychokinesis problems. Yet, a very old and widespread fantasy and one important to the psyche is being expressed by PK. It occurs in us at one time or another quite spontaneously, as for instance when I see someone in a boat stand up, and I think he is going to fall in the water, and just then he does—and then I have the feeling-fantasy that my thought caused his falling. Psychiatry might call this a delusional idea, yet there is evidently some need for the psyche to conceive things in this way, to put *a direct relation between thought processes and external events*. The mode of this relation has been conceived in many ways: causality, correspondence, coincidence, magic, occasionalism, synchronicity. The theory of this relation is here less the issue than is the dominant fantasy of a direct relation between two events, thereby overcoming the limits of the sensible, material world. Parapsychology maintains this fantasy and provides a place for it, and by this recognition, serves psychic reality.

The next set of ideas might be called expressions of an intimacy fantasy. Cases so often seem to arise from the intimate sphere, touching emotional depths: a dead or endangered beloved, a lost child, out-of-body visions at death's door, crisis apparitions. The clairvoyant is called upon to help with an intimate problem of despair and bereavement. So often the events have to do with death and love—events which touch the soul most deeply. The intimate sphere of personal values—what one calls soul, anima, psyche—is occasion for most powerful fantasies. Here we find ideas of the independence of the soul from all circumstances, and the belief in its indestructibility and its substantial reality. This fantasy is concretized into visual representations of the soul's substance, its undefeatedness by death, its freedom from the circumstances of time and space and all contingencies whatsoever. Parapsychology confirms this fundamental sense of soul, whether sentimental or scientific, and admits fully the sacredness of intimate reality. Gabriel Marcel has raised the fantasy of intimacy to supreme importance, considering love to be the fundamental principle in his ideas of parapsychology. He has said that no theory in this field can begin to be adequate unless it be based upon a theory of love. William James said that those who have had religious experiences show afterwards "a temper of peace, and in relation with others, a preponderance of loving affection." Frederic Myers quotes the speech of Diotima from Plato's *Symposium* on Eros, and defines love as a kind of generalized telepathy, or fellow-feeling, not bounded by divisions and separatedness. Separatedness is caused by the organization of consciousness through space, time and

causality, which divides things up into discrete particles. We find here a fantasy that parapsychology is a way of partaking in love, the cosmogonic Eros, and the end of separated and limited human existence. In as much as the devil is traditionally that which brings about all divisions, this fantasy also touches upon a strong Christian theme of overcoming evil through love.

Our colleagues show another dominant pattern in their writings. We may call this the "upward drive." The men from outer space are *above* us; with their *superior* intelligences they descend to earthlings. In out-of-body experiences, we learn of people disembodied upwards. They look down as they float up. Why do they not go to the underworld, also a traditional place of ghosts and spirits? They are not shades as much as lights. In apparitions are not the appearances often white, light and usually a bit off the ground? Do they have shoes and feet? Do the observers ever look for their shoes and feet? Some souls in some traditions are called chthonic; they sink down at death, joining the ancestral demons below the earth. Yet our fantasy tends to present an upward drive towards a locus reminiscent of Heaven.

This upwardness is sometimes inseparable from an onwardness in the literature. Burt refers to the doctrine of "posthumous spiritual evolution." The activity of the human spirit continues to evolve after death through successive stages. The disembodied spirit catches glimpses of his post-mortem existence by occasional admission into the spirit world while still in this life. Swedenborg or the Iranian mystics reported upon by Corbin communicate with higher powers, are given detailed instruction about the successive and improving stages upward and onward. This fantasy of evolution we find in many places, and it is quite fetching, witness the degree of enthusiasm surrounding the ideas of Teilhard de Chardin. Knowledge of the other world is a knowledge of both a higher world and a better world. Evidence to the contrary, such as the trivia reported by mediums in their communication with the spirits of the departed, or the memories of minor incidents as reported in Stevenson's cases of evidence for reincarnation does not affect the force of this fantasy. Instead, the idea of a better world, beyond and above, is buttressed by death-bed visions of crossing over, fearless, to a better condition.

Depth psychology once spoke of an "immortality drive." Not all parapsychology directly shows this sort of fantasy, yet a good deal of it does. The communication with the dead has been a major part of psychic research from its inception, and attempts to establish survival in one form or another continue to occupy our energies in parapsychology. Here, the "immortality drive" is not sublimated, as the psychoanalysts say, into a cultural objective (writing a book, making a statue),

nor is it transferred into the family (having descendents), but is taken at face value as a problem. One searches for direct evidence for the survival of human personality, its immortal aspect.

We come now to what seems to me to be the major fantasy, and the one which perhaps lies within the others. Let me read you two passages from the Tenth Frederic W. H. Myers Lecture, one from J. B. Rhine, the other from S. G. Soal.

"... the devastating influence of a physicalistic view of man has affected more of our social institutions than religion. . . . I will call attention to the fact that materialism seems to be the most fundamental principle of the philosophy of Russian Communism today. The Soviet system is attempting to build a society on a theory of man as matter. It is especially significant, I think, that Western society, with all its various attacks upon the communist system, has not seriously assailed this basic premise. Is it not a fact that until it utilizes the findings of parapsychology it has little with which to attack the materialistic state philosophy of the U.S.S.R.?"

"If we have—and of course we concluded long ago that we do have—scientific refutation of materialism that stands the severest critical analysis, on what justification should we hold aloof from the needs of our times with these vital and relevant findings? . . . The world is today facing what may be its greatest crisis, largely because we have not socially and civically faced up to the menace to our value system growing out of the overtowering domination of modern life by the philosophy of matter.

"... If this is too large a claim [for the importance of psi research] . . . then I have grossly misunderstood the nature of our field and its significance." ¹

In the Introduction to this paper of Rhine's Soal writes:

"Today a devastating materialism is creeping like a blight over large portions of the globe. Concentrating as it does on only the *sensory* [italics mine] aspects of human existence with a complete negation of all spiritual values, this system of thought will, if not counteracted, end by destroying what is best in human life. . . . Never at any time in history have we had more urgent need of an answer to the question, 'What is man's place in the cosmos?' . . . is he an immaterial being who, when he puts off 'this muddy vesture of decay' continues to live and feel and share in a freer and finer consciousness? . . . Of all studies pursued by man I believe that parapsychology is the most likely to provide an answer to the questions . . . the pursuit of happiness and the immortality of the soul." ²

It is questionable to me whether the refutation of materialism as a hypothesis for *interpreting* data can be accomplished by the *data* of parapsychology, or by any data whatsoever, since materialism as a theo-

retical model—and it is not a monolithic idea, but a complex and subtle expression of an archetypal fantasy concerning the primacy of the symbol of “matter”—shows itself highly viable, resilient and resistant. Yet, this *anti-matter fantasy* is perhaps the most persistent and deep-going in our field. I see it in the upward movement, the transcendence of the categories of matter (time, space and causality), in the immortality drive, in the light, white ghosts without feet, in the redemption through love.

In a short and essential paper given at Harvard in 1936, Jung spoke of three basic psychic modalities that determine human behavior in any field whatsoever. One of these primary modalities is the functioning of the psyche consciously and unconsciously; a second modality is the directions of the psyche's energy, introverted or extraverted.

“The third modality points, to use a metaphor, upward and downward, because it has to do with spirit and matter. It is true that matter is in general the subject of physics, but it is also a psychic category, as the history of religion and philosophy clearly shows. And just as matter is ultimately to be conceived of merely as a working hypothesis of physics, so also spirit . . . is in constant need of reinterpretation. The so-called reality of matter is attested primarily by our *sense*-perceptions, while belief in the existence of spirit is supported by *psychic* experience [*italics mine*]. Psychologically, we cannot establish anything more final with respect to either . . . than the presence of certain conscious contents, some of which are labelled as having a material, and others a spiritual, origin. . . . From the existence of these two categories ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, social, and religious systems of value arise which in the end determine how the dynamic factors in the psyche are to be used. Perhaps it would not be too much to say that the most crucial problems of the individual and of society turn upon the way the psyche functions in regard to spirit and matter.”³

Conclusions

The upward-downward polarity as conceptualized in the matter-spirit opposition seems to be an archetypal orientation schema basic to the psyche. Attempts at a unified field theory are attempts to join these polarities. Even if matter is redefined so as to be more spiritual, or spirit redefined so as to be a property of matter, the psychic tension of the upward and downward pulls remains as background factors to our formulations.

It seems to me that the anti-matter, pro-spirit fantasy of parapsychology occurs in many of its problems. The field itself, characterized as *extrasensory*, *parapsychological*, *supernatural*, emphasizes that it is neither mainly interested in the sense experiences on which a materialistic universe depends, nor even mainly interested in psychological events

where the psyche is the middle region between spirit and matter. Both words, "extrasensory" and "parapsychological," imply a spiritual position outside of regions considered material and psychological.

Furthermore, the struggles over method and demonstration—whether to use the material methods of sense and measurement for psi events, and then how to jump from the methods of matter to theories of spirit—these and other struggles contain the tensions of the upward-downward pulls. The upward proclivity may also account for the sundry topics accumulated in the parapsychological bag: dowsing and trance, mystic and religious experience, PK with dice, haunting, reincarnation, hypnosis, glossolalia, etc. All in one way or another reflect or derive their energy from a fantasy of the spirit.

I therefore think that parapsychology is engaged in an activity of the spirit. Further, I think that the spirit is irreducible to any other component, and is a basic modality of human nature, and perhaps of all nature. What "spirit" is, and how to define it, is far beyond the range of this paper, or any paper. In fact part of its essence is that it is "beyond." Classical descriptions of spirit claim that it shows itself in emotion and that its nature is spontaneous, free and upward-seeking. It announces itself in transcendent categories. It has also been maintained that its effects call the individual out, beyond, above entropy, inertia and gravity—the downward pull. If so, I doubt whether any method will ever altogether capture it, organize it or lay it flat in explanation. Perhaps as someone remarked concerning William James, the Creator does not want us to understand. Perhaps parapsychology refers not to what we do not yet know, but what we may never know, because it is unknowable. Spiritual events traditionally bear witness to spontaneous and individual cases or certain mass phenomena. (I think spontaneous belongs to the qualities of spirit and random is its correlate adjective in the realm of matter.) As Sir Alister Hardy would like to show through his new research project, this spontaneous factor may re-orient and revitalize a life that has lost its spirit; it may intrude and throw into question the one-sidedness of only material methods and hypotheses; it may even open the doors of belief in those symbols associated with spirit.

Because of this spirit fantasy, parapsychology is inevitably tied with matters of faith and skepticism, which appear for instance in the "sheep" and "goat" imagery of believers and skeptics. The archetype of spirit evokes questions of faith. Therefore, even this peroration of mine has overtones of a statement of faith—which it is not. It is an attempt to reflect the constellation that I think grips parapsychology.

It is questionable whether our field can ever "solve its problems" until it has fully taken into account the potency of this archetypal fan-

tasy of the spirit. One aspect of the spirit has been called "creativity"; the spirit creates problems. Perhaps one of the tasks of parapsychological research might be the investigation of the nature of this fantasy which creates these particular conundrums and dilemmas of parapsychological research. Perhaps our problems are different from those of science because they are driven by another sort of fantasy.

A main difficulty we shall encounter in any examination of the spirit idea as background to our field is that the notion of spirit is always influenced by the culture in which it appears. Parapsychology suffers not only from formulations of matter in terms of nineteenth-century materialism and science, it suffers even more from the replies to this materialism in the spirit's cultural carrier: nineteenth-century Christianity. We have noted this in our fantasies of will and work and love and immortality and resurrection upwards. St. Paul might well have been a founding member of the Society for Psychological Research. The inspirational mission of parapsychology also belongs here since mission and spreading the word also belong to the classical activities of the spirit, even if not necessarily in the mode of Protestantism's fantasy.

When addressing ourselves to the problems of ESP, such questions as "How is it possible?" and "What is its cause?" tend to keep us in the realm of problems. The questions: "Do you believe it?" and "Would you swear to it?" already show the effects of the spirit fantasy. Perhaps, we could ask other questions, such as "Why did it happen, and why to me?" and "What does it mean?" "What is its 'information content'?" We might shift our focus from the technical and practical "How" to the philosophical "Why."

Philosophical wonder asks about the necessity of events; sometimes philosophers have said that things do not occur unless there is sufficient and necessary ground for their occurrence. Even the Greek gods obeyed a law, not of space, time and causality, but of necessity. In this pre-Christian fantasy, the dominants of the spirit (the gods) are presented as conforming to necessity. On the level of human events, then, no matter how unwilling, irrational, incredulous and intensely personal parapsychological happenings may be, they yet follow a law: necessity. They are necessary. And our task then might be to ask questions in terms of the spirit: if necessary, then what do they mean? And our other task would be to discover less "how" they happen than to envision them as messages telling us something necessary in a form that is also necessary, and could not occur in any other form. I believe it was to the wider realm of necessity that Jung was pointing with his concept of synchronicity.

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