

WORKING GROUP A

(Quantitative Studies)

Chairmen:

S. G. SOAL

ROBERT H. THOULESS

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES OF WORKING GROUP A

The papers read to working group A have been on the following topics; psychokinesis (McConnell and Forwald), experimental method (Thouless), dowsing (Tromp) and ESP (Mme. Vasse).

Papers read to other working groups or in plenary sessions which bear on the special interests of Group A were many. Particularly those of Dr. Humphrey and Mr. Fraser Nicol and of Dr. Schmeidler on extrasensory perception, that of Dr. Wassermann on general theory, and that of Mr. Spencer Brown on the theory underlying statistical method.

The group welcomed the work of Dr. McConnell and of Mr. Forwald as providing new evidence about PK. Some doubts were expressed as to the possibility of outside influences affecting Mr. Forwald's apparatus. But these objections were satisfactorily dealt with by Mr. Forwald.

Dr. Thouless made some criticisms of the facts of assessment and design sometimes found in quantitative parapsychological researches, but he made it clear that this was not a general criticism of current parapsychological experiments. In the discussion there was general acceptance of the criticisms but some doubt was expressed as to whether the defects mentioned were to be found in recent work.

Dr. Tromp described physical influences affecting the motor response of the dowser and gave reasons for considering that his successes were not due to ESP. In discussion it seemed that there was a general opinion that ESP might enter into at least some dowsing activities.

Mme. Vasse described experiments with her own daughter on PK and ESP which gave interesting results.

The Humphrey-Nicol and Schmeidler papers were both of

interest to this section as providing valuable evidence of ESP as well as of its personality correlates. Both provide important guides as to fruitful experimental methods. Dr. Wassermann's paper was of special interest as integrating parapsychology with other fields of research. The discussion was limited by the difficulty of comprehension at first reading of its difficult argument, but the general impression was that this held promise of being a fruitful line of inquiry.

Mr. Spencer Brown's paper raised fundamental problems as to the legitimacy of the statistical methods currently used in parapsychology. An opposing paper was presented by Dr. Soal, supported particularly by evidence from his own researches with Shackleton and Mrs. Stewart. The discussion was prolonged and did not lead to complete agreement. It was generally felt that while this paper led to realization of the necessity for vigilance in examining presuppositions underlying applications of statistical methods, it did not give ground for doubting the general validity of the results of quantitative researches evaluated by current methods.

In general, the working group finds some satisfaction in the variety and value of the researches reported in its field.

R. H. THOULESS, *Joint Chairman*

Summaries of papers delivered follow in alphabetical order.