

DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY AND PARAPSYCHOLOGY

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Freud was the first to approach parapsychology from the angle of depth-psychology and psychoanalysis in his paper "Dream and Telepathy" in 1922. Other researchers, including Hollos, Ehrenwald, Eisenbud, Fodor and myself, followed with their own investigations along similar lines, exploring paranormal phenomena with the same methods which had been used to investigate customary psychological or psychopathological occurrences. In 1953, Dr. George Devereux collected and edited thirty-one essays in his *Psychoanalysis and the Occult*, dealing with data deriving either from the analysis of patients or from the essayists' own experience.

The basic legitimacy of envisaging psi phenomena from a psychoanalytic angle can be accepted only if one accepts the assumptions of modern dynamic psychology: the concept of a mind-structure involving unconscious processes and conflicts; the acknowledgment of an unconscious region of the mind and of its peculiar mechanisms, such as repression, displacement, condensation, regression, symbolism, etc.; recognition of primitive unconscious drives; and the knowledge that the unconscious can be explored through special techniques.

Devereux's anthology shows striking agreement among analysts on the significance of psi occurrences for a better theoretical understanding of mental functioning. Eisenbud, Ehrenwald, Gillespie and I have tried to show that the telepathy hypothesis may be an efficient tool in analytic work; that its negation or non-evaluation can lead either to under-interpretation or to futile mental acrobatics on the part of the analyst.

The highly irrational nature of unconscious emotions and conflicts is connected with the fact that they first occur at very primitive phylogenetic as well as ontogenetic developmental levels. We may take it as a well-founded hypothesis that extra-sensory perception could be a characteristic of low zoological species, which would then be, as some researchers have imagined, continuously involved in a sort of vague extra-sensory coalescence. This would be in contrast to the "individuation" trend which is a progressive biological achievement, found in more and more clear-cut form all along the ascending scale of biological evolution.

Independently of parapsychology, psychoanalysis has contended that the so-called "individual mind" is not really individualized. Jungian psychology stresses the trans-individual aspects of unconscious mental life, to the point of admitting a "collective unconscious." Ehrenwald compares personality to "the crest of a wave thrown up by the ocean for a split second of individual existence before it falls back into the sea." Conscious "singleness" would be therefore the superior, progressive aspect of a mental world which in itself is neither single nor conscious. In this latter world, therefore, psi phenomena—which seem to belong to a trans-individual unconscious—can and do occur.

This conception is the only one which can account for the biological "incongruity" of psi processes. Psi phenomena have little or no importance for the progress of our culture; they are less useful than normal channels of communication or learning. A telepathic event is less convenient or articulate than a telegram or a telephone call. The usefulness of our approach to psi phenomena lies in the fact that, as we hope, they may grant us a better understanding of the human mind as well as of psychic life in general, not because we may directly become indebted to them for scientific information. But this incongruity and uselessness is perfectly in accord with the conception of psi phenomena as belonging to a pre-individualized unconscious and primitive psycho-biological world.