

METHODICAL SENSUALISM AND PARAPSYCHOLOGY

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Gabriel Marcel reports that what we consider proof of an empirical theory depends partly on a convention. The same view is expressed by the Finnish philosopher Erik Ahlman. Likewise I have shown that methodical sensualism, which empirical science assumes, actually incorporates a conventional moment, and that the method of parapsychology accepts this. Parapsychology, however, differs in that though it accepts proof through so-called "common" sense modalities, it also regards parapsychic facts in their cognitive aspect as objectively self-validating. The premises of methodical sensualism lie "embedded" in the maxim: *Nihil est in intellectu quod non antea fuerit in sensu*. If by *in sensu* sense-modalities are understood, then this thesis becomes negated by the fact of ESP. The proved fact is that there exists, outside the sense-modalities, genuine knowledge of individual facts beyond the limits of these modalities, such as a telepathic connection between two friends which did not cease with the death of one.

To decide whether a perception can claim validity, independent of the senses, we recall analyses of ESP situations proving that phenomenological criteria exist, enabling percipients to distinguish sources of genuine perception from other products of the mind.

Concurrently, it must be observed that investigation employing these perceptions as criteria for determining the objectivity of their results is no longer parapsychology. For parapsychology is still bound by the requirements of methodical sensualism, while their absolute validity is thus negated.

Parapsychology, because of this basic negation, has deviated from the epistemological approach. This deviation I call "Copernican." Now parapsychology implies a "Copernican" revolution, and steals from the system of the world of sensory perception the position of center of our empirical knowledge. Parapsychology, therefore, will become a paradox of the most difficult kind for those who see the methodical sensualistic approach not as a mere working hypothesis of relative value, but who consider it absolutely essential to every cognition—a paradox which should not exist in the first place!

Marcel and Professor Shaefer indicated further that there is a methodical demand for scientific evaluation of research results still stronger than the demands of methodical sensualism. This consists in repeatable verification required by the natural sciences. Their claim, when it is raised to the rank of an epistemological hypothesis, will meet quantitative parapsychology half-way, and most certainly herald a new epoch in the parapsychological field. Yet to the representatives of natural science and its classical method the paradoxical element in parapsychology will be increased rather than diminished.