

PRELIMINARY STUDY OF ATTITUDES

L. DELPECH (*France*)

The attitudes of those not familiar with the scientific study of parapsychological problems as it is carried on today are greatly varied.

First of all, it is possible reasonably to eliminate the attitude of those who seek to reduce all parapsychological data to the category of merely pathological phenomena. In the light of contemporary research, this is clearly untenable. The best it can do is to explain only deviations—and deviations are found in all branches of science.

Even with this elimination we still encounter two basic attitudes:

A) Resistance to acceptance of evaluated data, such as:
(1) Objections based upon the principle of economy, which governs the thinking of many so that they insist upon unity, either consciously or unconsciously, as a part of the conclusions they will be willing to accept. (Examples of this are found in the thinking of Mach and Lamouch.) Application of such method leads to refusal to accept certain facts simply because the objector cannot integrate them with the universe as he has previously seen it. (Cf. Fort's book *Les damnés—The Damned*) (2) A certain fear, characteristic of the mind of the philosopher, of appearing too facile, hence naïve. Additionally, many philosophers are in mental retreat in the face of advancing science. This could fairly be said of Kant and Swedenborg. (3) Fear based upon the equivalent of a social taboo, not essentially unlike the fear of dealing with sex before Freud. It is possible that the historic origin of this fear was in the

attitude of the Inquisition, though here we deal with the deep roots of the human soul.

B) Uncritical evaluation approaching mere credulity: At an opposite pole from the resistances noted above are the tendencies toward a naïve, rather lyrical, credulity much like the magical turn of a child's mind. Yet even here, distinctions are necessary. A truly philosophical attitude is, above all, an open-minded one, willing "to accept anything, but conditionally, pending a close study of the matter" (Charles Henry). Varied attitudes of the mind, or to be more precise, different representations of the universe, correspond with these attitudes. The author has tried to classify different attitudes by using both a questionnaire highlighting conscious beliefs, as well as projective tests (T. A. T., Rorschach, Szondi). He was thus led to discovery of a clear correlation between the representation of the universe of the subject and the fact that he accepted or refused paranormal phenomena. He confirmed a principle admitted by Bergson: the necessity of introducing such facts in a science or experience to some degree on the sensorial level, to make them seem plausible.