

METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF "PSYCHOANALYTIC PARAPSYCHOLOGY"

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A task of parapsychology is to lay down and clarify the logical and psychological rules according to which certain selected events are relatable in the absence of any demonstrable connection of a physical kind between them. On what bases do we select certain events out of a large universe of events in order to perform in connection with them those procedures in terms of which we define a psi event? How do we define the nature of and establish a correspondence between the events we have selected as constituting the presumptive psi complex?

This question can be answered easily only within the framework of a statistical approach in which the rules for establishing a correspondence are laid down mathematically at the start as in card-guessing. But in the domain of spontaneously-occurring historical events as viewed psychoanalytically, these problems are more difficult to deal with. Here there can be no pre-conceived program of definitely ordered steps, but only a rather elastic set of rules, consisting of a system of certain assumed genetic, dynamic and symbolic relationships. When two events which can be linked in this way come to our notice, the making of a correspondence begins. By the same token, the process of selection has begun. The correspondence would have to be described more in terms of a fluid growth of uncertain boundary rather than on "likeness," for example. The psi hypothesis is only relevant if these events selected for study as provisionally corresponding have no communicating linkage of a physical kind.

In the general case, there is no way of stating the problem of this correspondence mathematically according to the theory of chance. The question of chance thus becomes in practice a question simply of the number and kinds of interrelationships that can be established between two or more events *taken initially merely as points of departure for inquiry.*

What justification do we have, then, for endowing a particular event E_2 we have selected with a higher probabilistic validity as a possible determinant of E_1 than any of r events which can satisfy the requirement of psychoanalytic relatibility just as well? The only answer is that when we select certain events and not others this is purely a matter of historical actuality. Our very act of selection is itself to be regarded as part of the very historical situation which we end up making a statement about. Actually we do not so much select as, in the only sense in which we can get our bearings, we *are selected* in the course of and by the pressure of events themselves. The more correspondences that can be established between two events, chosen according to our rules, the more presumably valid statements we would be in a position to make, if agreement were obtained and there was a warrant for the particular rules used in establishing our correspondences. But this problem, for better or for worse, is somewhat outside the strict scope of logic.