

PARAPSYCHOLOGY AND THANATOLOGY

PROCEEDINGS OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

HELD IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

NOVEMBER 6-7, 1993



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Edited by
Lisette Coly and Joanne D.S. McMahon

PARAPSYCHOLOGY FOUNDATION, INC.
NEW YORK, N.Y.

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Published by the Parapsychology Foundation, Inc.
228 East 71st Street, New York, N.Y. 10021

ISBN: 0-912328-46-0

Library of Congress Catalog Number: 95-67318

Manufactured in the United States of America

The opinions expressed herein are those of the individual participants and do not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the editors or the Parapsychology Foundation, Inc.

Dedicated to the memory of
Emilio Servadio
1904-1995

The Parapsychology Foundation, especially our founder
Eileen J. Garrett, was privileged for many years
to work with Emilio Servadio.
The legacy of Dr. Servadio's
lifetime contributions to parapsychology
will continue to be appreciated.

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INTRODUCTION

LISETTE COLY: Good Morning, Everyone. As I welcome you to this meeting in my capacity as Parapsychology Foundation Vice President, let me introduce myself, I am Lisette Coly. The 40th International Conference of Parapsychology Foundation is now in session.

It is with a sense of accomplishment that Parapsychology Foundation stands today sponsoring its 40th Conference, looking back over a considerable body of work since its inception in 1951. The Board of Trustees and staff are very excited to convene this particular conference addressing Parapsychology and Thanatology—a topic of fascination surely for all humankind but a topic of specific interest for our founder—author, executive, publisher and well respected psychic, Eileen J. Garrett. The Foundation was pleased to have previously sponsored two conferences—one in London, England, the other in the South of France, both in 1966—devoted to survival and its attendant issues. In a book that Garrett edited and published in 1957, *Does Man Survive Death?* her interest in today's topic was clearly stated when she wrote:

The study of human survival after death is not a form of esoteric dabbling... Out of a study of phenomena that pointed to an after-life, current psychical research has evolved. (p. 3) As long as I see this whole tapestry of past events, and often of the future, living its life side by side with the events of the moment, then I am compelled to ask whether survival as we comprehend it is indeed the answer, or is what is left that well of memory? It is my quest for the answer to this enigma that is driving me with passionate dedication to spend all the moments of my life making it possible for scientists and philosophers, theologians and psychologists, to search for the answer which has so far alluded me. (p. 16)

At the present time, I will introduce you to Parapsychology Foundation's President, Eileen Coly, who succeeded her mother Eileen Garrett in 1970, and has continued to apply the resources of the Foundation to the quest for answers to questions presented by the survival hypothesis and relevant inquiries raised in the science of parapsychology. I feel that Garrett would be gratified by her efforts in

this direction, and as the daughter of Eileen Coly I share the commitment to the same objectives. Ladies and Gentlemen, Eileen Coly.

REFERENCE

Garrett, E.J. (Ed.). (1957). *Does man survive death? A symposium*. New York: Helix Press.

GREETINGS

EILEEN COLY: Good Morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am very pleased to be able to greet you today assembled to shed more light on many aspects of the survival hypothesis. F.W.H. Myers (1903) wrote in the introduction to *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*:

The question for man most momentous of all is whether or not he has an immortal soul; or—to avoid the word *immortal*, which belongs to the realm of infinites—whether or no his personality involves any element which can survive bodily death. In this direction have always lain the gravest fears, the farthest-reaching hopes, which could either oppress or stimulate mortal minds. (p. 1)

It seems we certainly have a busy program of deliberations and discussions for the upcoming two days!

We will be kept in line very capably and graciously during the conference sessions by our esteemed moderator, Dr. Hoyt Edge. Hoyt has long been a friend to Parapsychology Foundation both professionally and personally over the years in many capacities—grantee, conference participant, and observer. He did such a superb job chairing the 1988 Parapsychology Foundation Conference in Chapel Hill *Psi Research Methodology* we have prevailed upon him to once again act as moderator. I hope he will interject his expertise, thoughts, and comments into our discussions as we know they will be of great value.

As we all are anxious to begin I will now turn the proceedings over to Dr. Edge.

REFERENCE

Myers, F.W.H. (1903). *Human personality and its survival of bodily death*. London: Longmans, Green.

OPENING REMARKS

HOYT EDGE: Thank you, Eileen and Lisette. It is always a pleasure to participate in one of the Parapsychology Foundation's conferences and a special privilege to be involved in the 40th conference, a significant milestone. The opportunity for such intense and lengthy discussion among participants in a conference is rare, and if any subject deserves special attention, it is the one which is our focus for the next two days.

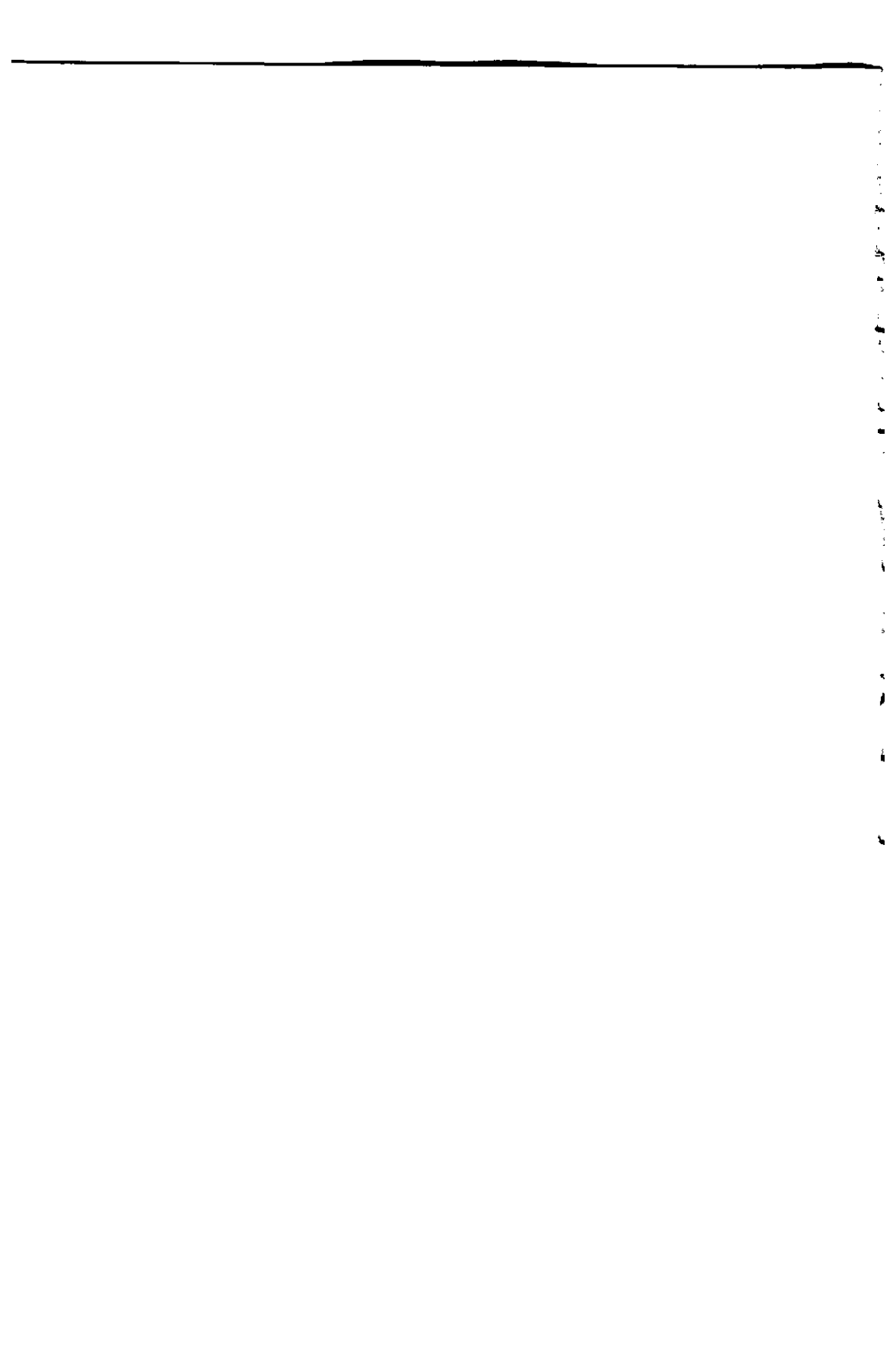
Survival has been discussed for as long as humans have existed, and it was a central issue—perhaps *the* central issue—for the founders of parapsychology over a century ago. The two basic sets of questions that undergird the discussion then is still the focus of our papers today: the philosophical questions—of how we understand the self that can survive and whether it is even logically possible—and the empirical questions—of what evidence can be gathered and how to evaluate it. These original questions still are asked, but the answers today are broader and deeper.

Philosophically, the question of survival became more intense in the late 19th-century against the background of the growing mechanistic materialism inherent in Cartesian dualism and from the implications of Darwinism. In many ways, the evidence for materialism has only strengthened over the last 100 years. Data from cognitive science, from neuro- and physiological psychology, from sociobiology, and from early discoveries in the human genome project, among other areas, have been interpreted to support materialist theories. While I believe there are significant data and movements in traditional science which cast doubt on purely reductionist views, it is safe to say that the overwhelming number of natural and social scientists and most philosophers are materialists of one sort or another. Against this background, however, parapsychologists are discussing new and non-reductionistic ways of understanding the self and what we might mean by survival.

In terms of the second question, involving the empirical evidence for survival, the case is different. Research has changed significantly in the last century. Quite simply, there has been a movement from the study of mediums to an investigation of ordinary people. It is important to

note that Eileen Garrett not only spanned the pivotal time of this change, forming a bridge between the two methodologies, but she helped create the modern approach. As we all know, Eileen, as one of and probably the last of the great mediums in the history of parapsychology, was wonderful about participating as a subject in research projects. But she also supported the research that investigated the extraordinary abilities of ordinary people; and the Parapsychology Foundation has continued its support of this new research focusing no longer on the great medium but on diverse approaches, including relatively new areas, like NDE research, which has established itself as a subject area apart from parapsychology.

With the diversity and depth achieved both in the philosophical questions and in the empirical questions—and we have papers on both areas—we are in for some serious discussion.



TOWARD A GENERAL THEORY OF SURVIVAL

JOHN PALMER

The quest for evidence of postmortem human survival is one of the longest standing preoccupations of psychical research. From time to time this exercise has produced what many parapsychologists consider persuasive evidence of psychic phenomena, namely, extrasensory perception (ESP) or psychokinesis (PK). The question has then become what is the source of these ostensible paranormal effects. Survivalists argue that the source must be some kind of discarnate entity, while the opposing camp maintains that all the evidence can be accounted for by strong psi among the living, so-called "super-ESP" or "super-psi".

Not much progress has been made in resolving this controversy. It is a premise of the present paper that this state of affairs is attributable in part to a lack of sufficient theoretical development on both sides. This is especially true of the super-psi hypothesis, whose advocates often use our alleged failure to determine the limits of psi in the living as a basis for claiming that such psi can handle whatever evidence the survivalists put forth. This "anything goes" approach is unfalsifiable (Palmer, 1975; Roll, 1982) and of little scientific value.

Except for Stephen Braude (e.g., Braude, 1993), theory development has been the province of the survivalists. However, most of this theorizing has been directed toward explaining particular pockets of evidence such as mediumship (Sidgwick, 1915) and reincarnation cases (Stevenson, 1987). Valuable as such contributions are, we ultimately need a more powerful theory that not only integrates the disparate survival databases but also integrates these with the much larger body of evidence for psi in non-survival contexts. In other words, we need a general theory of psi that explicitly provides for a discarnate origin of some psi effects. Such a theory must be internally coherent, falsifiable, and provide a framework for testable predictions. Super-psi advocates notwithstanding, psi clearly does have limits, even though we cannot yet adequately state what they are. We know, for example, that psi is much less common than "ordinary" means of communicating with our environment. We also know that some species of psi (e.g., telepathy) are more common than others (e.g., poltergeists) (Palmer, 1979). A good theory of psi must account for such limitations. Finally,

it would be ideal, although not absolutely necessary, for the theory to integrate psi with mainstream science, particularly those branches concerned with the mind and brain.

The parapsychologist whose papers on survival best exemplify such global theorizing is William Roll, particularly his "psi-structures" theory (Roll, 1982).¹ Drawing on the writings of William James (1909), Gustav Pagenstecher (1922), Whately Carington (1944), and Gardner Murphy (1945), Roll proposes that each individual personality forms part of a psi structure that includes remnants of his previous social interactions and contacts with physical objects.

Psi structures, however, encompass not only an individual and his or her immediate or remembered environment, but also distant events... When a person moves, in the ordinary sense, from one location to another, the person at the same time remains, in a parapsychological sense, "in" the old environment...people remain "psi-contiguous" with places and people they have encountered in the past, or...they are part of the psi structure that includes these places and people...[thus] an individual can become aware of events that involve objects or people that are spatially remote from his or her body, but that are psi-contiguous to it. (Roll, 1982, pp. 206-207)

In other words, if I move into a room which you previously occupied, I come into contact with your psi-structure, from which I psychically obtain information about your past physical and social contacts. The theory is relevant to survival in that "the dispositions and other aspects of human personality remain in 'implicate form' [cf., Pribram, 1978] in the environment of the organism after it has died" (Roll, 1982, p. 209).

The purpose of this paper is to provide an alternative theory to Roll's. I am proposing it not because I think Roll's theory is necessarily wrong or that mine is necessarily right. I do not even claim to be an advocate of my own theory, because I am not yet prepared personally to accept that we survive death in any form whatsoever. I

¹ More recently, Roll (1989) has introduced the concept of the "long body", which seems to have the same implications for survival as do psi structures.

am engaging in this exercise because, as I have stated elsewhere (Palmer, 1987), I believe that to verify psi as a paranormal process we must confirm a particular, testable theory of psi, and I think that it is not only appropriate, but important, that some of the candidates postulate postmortem survival. Indeed, it is only through confirmation of a psi theory of the latter type that the survival controversy will be resolved in favor of the survivalist position. We have not yet reached the level of theoretical maturity in parapsychology where we can settle on one "paradigm" (cf., Kuhn, 1970); what we need instead is a (hopefully friendly) competition among a variety of theories, each of which has its own testable implications.

My original intent was to propose a theory that would be more similar than Roll's to traditional conceptions of survival, in that it would postulate a more active, dynamic, and cohesive existence to the surviving entity, more of a genuine "personality". I ended up with something midway between Roll's theory and the conventional conception. It bears some important similarities to Roll's theory, but there are also marked differences.

Many scientific theories, especially in psychology, evolve inductively from a consideration of the pertinent data. Other theorists arrive at their initial assumptions more independently and then tailor them to fit the existing data. This latter "top down" approach is represented in parapsychology by the observational theories (Millar, 1978), in contrast to Stanford's (1977) PMIR theory, which illustrates a more inductive approach. I have chosen the top down approach in this case, and to make this clear I will unveil the theory in a manner that stresses its stages of evolution in my own mind.

Metaphysical Considerations

I began by asking myself what metaphysical system is most compatible with survival. The candidates are physical monism (materialism), mental monism (idealism), and dualism. Materialism is clearly the least attractive candidate. Most materialists maintain that survival is impossible because all mental activities are dependent upon the physical brain, which disintegrates at death. It is conceivable,

however, that mental activities could be carried out by some sort of material entity that is not subject to biological decay, as is proposed in some Eastern metaphysics. It would need to be either some permanent substance with extension and mass or some sort of physical energy. The latter seems particularly incompatible with the notion that what survives is some sort of stable entity. In either case, verification would require detection by some kind of physical measurement, a burden I would not wish to assume simply for the benefits of embracing the scientifically fashionable ontology.

Some sort of idealism is a more realistic possibility. If we take the prototypically idealistic ontology of Bishop Berkeley, in which reality consists of ideas in the mind of God, I suppose the survival issue boils down to whether God wants to keep thinking about us after we die. I really don't know what to do with this viewpoint for the purpose of building a theory, and Berkeley's idealism seems to have very few adherents in modern philosophy, despite the apparent difficulty in refuting it.

A more promising form of idealism is the panexperientialism of Alfred North Whitehead. David Griffin (1993), who has presented a very readable interpretation of Whitehead's cosmology, does not consider it to be a form of idealism, but rather an ontology distinct from the standard three. I disagree (Palmer, 1993), on the grounds that the world Whitehead describes is fundamentally mental. Specifically, and expressed very crudely, it consists of a kind of substratum of consciousness plus a temporal sequence of "occasions of experience" that communicate information to one another through a process called "prehension" that includes what we call psi.

Following Whitehead, Griffin (1993) maintains that while panexperientialism allows for survival it does not require survival; the question is left for empirical resolution. He nonetheless puts forth a kind of Whiteheadian survival theory that might be placed alongside the efforts of Roll and myself as a separate alternative. He cites a speculation by John Cobb (1967) that "psyches", which are the most advanced or "dominant" of the occasions of experience, have evolved in humans to the point that they no longer need the body as a source of prehensions, because their premortem concerns do not primarily involve the welfare of the body as is the case with lower animals.

As I am attracted to Whitehead's cosmology, it would be tempting to build my theory on it. However, panexperientialism does not make as sharp a distinction between mind and brain as I consider optimal for this purpose. It is too much like Sperry's (1970) emergent materialism in this regard. I have chosen instead to opt for dualism, in which the distinction is more clear-cut. Whereas panexperientialism allows survival, dualism virtually *requires* it. The idea that matter and mind are fundamentally different substances seems to me to be the clearest basis for maintaining that mind is not subject to the laws of biological decay. Dualism also more readily allows us to deny to mind qualities such as (physical) extension, which at the very least are a nuisance for a theory of psi, which is generally considered to be space/time independent.

However, my strategic embrace of dualism does not require that I accept everything René Descartes had to say on the subject. For example, despite the recent emergence of the pineal gland in parapsychological theorizing (Roney-Dougal & Vogl, 1993), I reject the notion that the mind is located in (or is it at?) this particular piece of anatomy. My rejection has less to do with the pineal gland per se than with the fact that I find it nonsensical that an entity lacking physical extension can be "located" anywhere in physical space. For some reason, this locating of the Cartesian mind in physical space seems to bother philosophers less than the notion that mind and matter can somehow interact. The latter, which my dualistic theory admittedly requires, is at least conceivable to me, even though I cannot explain the nature of the interaction in mechanistic terms. (In fact, I believe it is inexplicable in such terms.)

Just as dualism has implications for survival theory, survival evidence has implications for dualism. Survival evidence could not prove dualism because, as noted above, it would also be consistent with some idealistic ontologies. However, for all practical purposes it would refute materialism, because it would imply, at a minimum, that personal memories continue to exist after the death of the brain.

Incidentally, I do not agree with John Beloff (1989) that psi evidence other than survival evidence would refute materialism. The reason is quantum mechanics. Even if we grant that quantum theory does not at present explain psi, at least not in the sense of direct transmission of

information from a source to a receiver, the fact that matter has been shown to have non-local properties opens the door for a future quantum theory of psi based on brain processes.

Origins of the Theory

The stimulus for my dualistic theory of survival was an insight that originated with Frederic Myers (1886-1887), who speculated that "perhaps when I *attend* to a thing, or *will* a thing, I am directing upon my own nervous system actually that same force which, when I direct it on another man's nervous system, is the 'vital influence' of mesmerists, or the 'telepathic impact' of which Mr. Gurney and I have said so much" (pp. 172-173). In other words, telepathy is the externalization of the same process that we use all the time internally to initiate willed behavior. This insight was developed further in the "Shin" theory of Thouless and Wiesner (1947).

The internal "psi" process to which Myers referred was described hypothetically in more detail by the distinguished philosopher Karl Popper and the equally distinguished neurophysiologist John Eccles as part of their dualistic theory of mind (Popper & Eccles, 1977). Popper began by dividing reality into three "worlds". World 1 is the world of the materialist, the world of physical objects. World 2 is the world of the idealist, the world of subjective experience. Popper then added World 3, which consists of the products of the human mind, such as myths, art, and scientific theories. This somewhat Platonic notion does not make much sense to me, and I will not discuss it further. Worlds 1 and 2 are sufficient to create the dualistic context for the neurophysiological aspects of the theory, which Eccles summarizes as follows:

The self-conscious mind is an independent entity ... that is actively engaged in reading out from the multitude of active centres in the modules of the liaison areas of the dominant cerebral hemisphere. The self-conscious mind selects from these centres in accord with its attention and its interests and integrates its selection to give the unity of conscious experience from moment to moment. It also acts back on the neural centres ... Thus it is

proposed that the self-conscious mind exercises a superior interpretive and controlling role upon the neural events by virtue of a two-way interaction across the interface between World 1 and World 2 ... It is proposed that the unity of conscious experience comes not from an ultimate synthesis in the neural machinery but in the integrating action of the self-conscious mind on what it reads out from the immense diversity of neural activities in the liaison brain. (Popper & Eccles, 1977, pp. 355-356)

The modules Eccles refers to are ensembles of up to 10,000 neurons "with a functional arrangement of feed-forward and feedback excitation and inhibition" (p. 366). The liaison areas are those locations in the dominant hemisphere "which have linguistic and ideational performance or which have polymodal inputs" (p. 363), especially Brodmann areas 39 and 40 and the prefrontal lobes. At any given time, some of the modules are open to interaction with the mind and others are closed. When all are closed, the result is unconsciousness. The modules are considered to be very labile (to borrow a popular parapsychological term), and only a weak input from the mind is necessary to alter their functioning, which alterations then radiate out to other brain modules by normal physiological mechanisms.

My strategy was to take Eccles' theory, with some modifications described below, and expand it to explain psi and survival evidence. In so doing, I deliberately attempted, for the sake of parsimony, to minimize the number of new assumptions that must be added to the materialistic account of mind.

Ordinary Mental Processes

I began by defining a substratum for World 2. Because this substratum is analogous to physical space in World 1, I will provisionally call it mental space. (The reason for the "provisionally" is that this mental space lacks extension, i.e., spatial properties, as defined for World 1.) This move allows me to avoid the problem of where World 2 entities are "located" in physical space, and it also provides for the origination of psi processes in World 2.

Such a mental space is difficult to conceptualize, because we are programmed to think in terms of physical space. In this sense, the situation is comparable to what we find with advanced physical theories like quantum mechanics, which can only be properly understood mathematically. It might help a little to follow Smythies (1989) and think of this mental space as existing in higher spatial dimensions than the three we are used to. However, I prefer to simply avoid talking about dimensions at all in relation to World 2; I see no necessity for doing so.

The only quality I attribute to mental space is consciousness, which I define as the potential for subjective awareness. This allows me to drop the term mental space and replace it with consciousness.

Consciousness is "inhabited" by an almost infinite number of what I will call *psiads*. These psiads are representations of each integrated preconscious thought or image (i.e., meaning unit) generated by the open brain modules in Eccles' theory. In contrast to Eccles, I propose no scanning process by which consciousness seeks out particular thoughts or images of interest; they are imprinted upon consciousness automatically. Like consciousness itself, the psiads lack spatial dimensions (which is fortunate, because there are so many of them!)

Strictly speaking, what is recorded in the psiad is the physiological state of the entire brain (or one hemisphere, in the case of split-brain patients) at the time the preconscious thought or image is created by an open module, but only insofar as that state is relevant to the particular thought or image. From a psychological point of view, the most important background or contextual information recorded in the psiad is the person's body concept at the time. This body concept is necessary to provide the implicit awareness that the thought or image is one's own.²

Not all brain processes result in psiadic representation. The latter only occurs when (a) cortical arousal is sufficiently great and (b) the *intensity* of the thought or image is sufficiently great. This intensity level, which is coded in the psiad along with the representation of the

² The necessity for this assumption became clear to me after reading an incisive critique of survival theory by Alan Gauld (1982).

brain state, is correlated with, for example, the intensity of a stimulus that impinges on the organism's physical receptors or the degree of autonomic arousal occasioned by a particular recollection. In terms of Eccles' theory, intensity is governed by the factors that determine whether a module is open or closed.

At this point, I must introduce two other respects in which I have departed from Eccles' theory. Although he equivocates somewhat, Eccles generally limits the interaction of Worlds 1 and 2 to the dominant cerebral hemisphere. This is because he sees consciousness as closely associated with language, which is primarily a function of the dominant hemisphere. This argument makes no sense to me. For example, I can be aware of and appreciate a work of abstract art without having a verbal label for it or thinking about it in words. Thus in my theory, both hemispheres are open to World 2 directly.

Second, and more importantly, the theory attributes most sequential thought processes to the brain, whereas Eccles attributes them to the mind. Attribution of thought to the brain is also espoused by the conservative dualist philosopher Howard Robinson (1989), who argues that thought must be embodied because concepts require memories, which are stored in the brain. I have tried to be conservative myself and attribute to the brain as many mental functions as it seems within its nature to undertake, even if physiological research has yet to adequately explain how the brain performs these functions. In the course of arriving at these judgments, I asked myself what mental functions I could reasonably expect a computer to perform. This tactic implies no commitment to particular outcomes of computer simulation or artificial intelligence research; it is simply a way to try to understand what matter can do. This exercise led me to conclude that the brain should be granted the capacities to input data (sensation and perception), process data (sequential thought), store data (memory), and output data (initiation of behavior).

There remain two functions, however, that the theory allots exclusively to World 2. Foremost of these is *consciousness*, which I have already considered. It is simply inconceivable to me that any machine could have subjective awareness. The interaction of consciousness (as reflected in the psiads) with thoughts or images in the

brain is responsible for giving these thoughts and images their subjective qualities, such as meaningfulness, value, and hedonic tone.

Second is what I will call *spontaneous functional ideation*. Most of our thought processes are not spontaneous. They are triggered by immediately preceding thoughts or sensations in a kind of stimulus-response chain (that, of course, is modulated by a host of complicated contextual factors that cognitive and linguistic psychologists love to grapple with). Some of these thoughts can be characterized as intentions to do something or recall something. In addition, the theory provides for some indeterminacy in the system. For example, it might simply be a matter of chance which particular surface memory comes to mind as an expression of a certain propositional memory.

However, the theory also provides for thoughts or intentions that arise neither from previous mentation nor happenstance. Such an assumption seems necessary, for example, to account for creative insight which, although spontaneous, seems too functional to be mere happenstance. Secondly, many of our "willed" actions seem to be more than just the end of a stimulus-response chain. Much of the mainstream psychological research seen as having implications for the mind-body problem concerns presumably unconditioned but purposeful acts such as moving one's finger at an arbitrary time (see, e.g., Libet, 1985). The theory attributes such insights and intentions to psiads "choosing" to manifest through particular brain modules that result in the optimal expressions of the thoughts or images they represent.

By virtue of being embedded in consciousness, the psiads absorb the *potential* for awareness, and thus conscious experience, but they do not have conscious experiences themselves. Such experiences arise only from interaction between the psiads and the brain. Also, psiads cannot directly interact with each other. The teleological aspect of the theory is that the psiads by their nature seek to actualize their potential for conscious experience, and they are attracted to brains because brains are by far the best vehicle for doing this. From the standpoint of evolution, the theory postulates that brains evolved for the specific purpose of granting conscious experience to the psiads, and the purpose of the preceding stages of evolution was to lay the groundwork for the emergence of brains.

This theory of psiads bears some resemblance to the sophisticated "psychon" theory of Whately Carington (1946), although it was arrived at independently. The main differences between Carington's theory and mine are that his psychons are capable of independent experience and can interact with each other directly to form "systems". As we will see later, psiads also have some psychic functions in common with the "psitrons" hypothesized by Adrian Dobbs (1967), although the latter are more analogous to subatomic particles.

Once a psiad is formed by input from the brain, it immediately and reflexively applies a psychokinetic input to the same or associated brain location. Provided that the intensity coding in the psiad and the cortical arousal in the brain are high enough, and the interaction is not aborted by competing psiads or obstructive cognitive brain processes (e.g., psychological defenses), a conscious experience results. This conscious experience causes a reduction in the psiad's intensity coding. If this value is sufficiently low, the psiad ceases to exist; it is "exhausted". If the psiad survives, it will continue to seek actualization as a conscious experience, but because of its reduced intensity coding it will be at a relative disadvantage in competing with fresh psiads. If it does manifest, it will most likely do so as a memory experience, or "recollection". As noted previously, most recollections are not spontaneous but result from the activation of memories stored in the brain by preceding brain processes in the modulated causal chain. This activation creates its own psiad that then reflexively becomes an experience.

The psiad's success in becoming an experience is also a function of the similarity of the brain state at the time of the psiad's potential manifestation to the brain state encoded in the psiad, which is the brain state at the time of origin. In most cases this is no problem, because the psiad manifests immediately after it is produced with the same brain that produced it. The brain state has no time to change. This does become a problem, however, when the psiad seeks to manifest at some later time, because the "real-time" brain state will by then be somewhat different. This matter of brain state similarity plays a crucial role in the theory's explanation of psi phenomena, to which we now turn.

Psi Processes in the Living

Telepathy. For the most part, psiads interact with their brain of origin, or "host" brain. However, the theory postulates that occasionally they can interact with other brains. The likelihood that this will occur is governed by the same factors that determine likelihood of manifestation in the host brain. This extension of the theory requires no new terms, concepts, or entities; it is simply a generalization of the principles previously discussed.

Of these various limiting factors, brain state similarity is perhaps the most noteworthy as far as telepathy is concerned. Precisely what a brain state is and what are the relevant aspects of brain state similarity have not yet been defined, and this is an area where the theory needs more work. However, the theory does propose that when two people think the same thing, their brain states are similar in some relevant respect. The brain states of people who are genetically related to each other should, all else being equal, be more similar than brain states of people not so related, because of the functional consequences of genetically based structural differences. This means that telepathy should be especially prevalent among pairs of such people.

The above process is equivalent to what has been called active-agent telepathy. However, I prefer Rex Stanford's (1974) acronym MOBIA (mental or behavioral influence of an agent), because the process is more accurately described as a PK influence on the brain than as mind-to-mind communication. MOBIA, according to the theory, is the primary and most common mode of psychic functioning. (Telepathic interactions will hereafter be referred to as mobic.)

In her critique of MOBIA, Louisa Rhine (1956) noted that agents frequently do not seem motivated to communicate to the percipient. This argument does not apply to the present theory, because the psiads are not motivated to transmit a message, just to attain experience through a receptive brain.

Brains differ structurally in the capacity of their states to align with the brain states of other persons. This assumption is needed to account for individual differences in the "telepathic" ability of percipients. It follows that such brains should also be very receptive to their own psiads. In psychological terms, this means that persons with strong

"telepathic" abilities as percipients should have very rich experiential lives generally. I have the impression that this is the case, but no hard data; thus, this can be treated as an empirical prediction of the theory.

Good mobic agents should be persons whose psiads tend to have high intensity codings that allow the psiads to survive after interacting with the host brain. Thus, from a psychological perspective, good mobic agents should be persons who experience things very intensely, another testable prediction. The theory also explains why MOBIA seems to work best when the agent "lets go" of the image to be transmitted; when the psiad is not manifesting through the host brain, it is freer to manifest elsewhere.

Clairvoyance. According to the theory, brains are especially qualified to be the source of psiads and indeed evolved for that purpose. To postulate that any object or event could serve that function, although logically permissible, would be very awkward for the theory. Thus, the theory makes the bold prediction that clairvoyance does not exist as a distinct form of psi.

The theory deals with ostensible clairvoyance as either MOBIA (usually precognitive) or PK. MOBIA is a possibility whenever the target information is subsequently perceived by someone, consciously or unconsciously. This seems to be invariably true in spontaneous cases. In card guessing experiments of the Rhinean type, the targets were always known at some point by the experimenter (who needed to tally the hits), and in most cases they were fed back to the subject as well. It is customary in random number generator (RNG) experiments to provide subjects with trial-by-trial feedback of targets. PK is another attractive option in RNG clairvoyance experiments, as RNGs are known to be susceptible to PK (Radin & Nelson, 1989).

There are three experiments I know of that claim to provide evidence for "pure clairvoyance". In two of these (Schmeidler, 1964; Targ & Tart, 1985), forced-choice targets were selected by computer and erased before anyone observed them. In Targ and Tart's experiment, the seeding of the pseudo-random target sequence seemed susceptible to PK. A similar possibility may apply to Schmeidler's experiment, but the method of obtaining the entry point to the computerized random number table is not known (Schmeidler, personal

communication). The third study was a remote viewing experiment (Targ, Targ, & Lichtarge, 1985) in which the marginally significant results could be explained by PK on the dice task used to select the target, supplemented by mobic knowledge of the subject's future mentation, of the judge's future awareness of the potential targets, and of the interviewees' awareness of the locations of these potential target slides in the carousel of the slide projector.

Additional research will be needed to resolve the status of pure clairvoyance. The theory predicts that the results of all the experiments, evaluated collectively, will fail to confirm it.

Precognition. Earlier in the paper, I noted that World 2 is independent, or devoid, of physical space. To postulate further that it is independent of time would allow for *true* precognition, by which I mean direct apprehension of future events. Such an extension would be natural because space and time are treated comparably as dimensions in modern physics.

The theory would allow true precognition to occur in either or both of two ways. First, a psiad could be formed at time t_1 by brain events occurring at some later time t_2 . Second, a psiad at time t_2 could cause a brain event at some earlier time t_1 .

True precognition has been criticized on conceptual grounds by Braude (1986), who treats it as a special case of retrocausality. In particular, he notes that it has difficulty in accounting for the surrounding network of retrocausal events leading to and away from the precognitive event. The theory, however, postulates that episodes of retrocausation are extremely rare as compared to ordinary forward causation; thus, the chains of retrocausal events of concern to Braude are very unlikely to occur. Braude acknowledges this option but maintains that retrocausality would still be unparsimonious in that it would entail new definitions of causality and related concepts. This is certainly true, but lack of parsimony is not a fatal argument against true precognition.

The alternative explanations of precognitive events are logical inferences from contemporaneous mobic input and creation of the events by PK. These options have the advantage of not introducing new concepts, but can they plausibly account for all the data? PK

interpretations are awkward for predictions of strong effects, such as the Aberfan landslide (Barker, 1967), because we do not find macro-PK effects of this magnitude in other contexts. The "ESP" option also is restricted somewhat in such cases because of the theory's denial of clairvoyance. MOBIA, however, is theoretically possible in all cases except those, like RNG experiments, in which the precognized events are randomly determined and thus not predictable from current information. These are just the kinds of labile situations for which a PK explanation is most plausible.³

I am not prepared at present to take a stand on this matter. Suffice it to say that should it prove necessary for the theory to embrace true precognition, it could easily accommodate it, as described at the beginning of this section.

Psychokinesis. Inasmuch as MOBIA is PK applied to a remote brain, the theory reduces all forms of psi to PK (unless the formation of psiads is treated as ESP). I noted earlier that MOBIA is an extension to other brains of the relationship psiads have with their host brain. PK on other physical systems, including nonbiological ones, is simply a furthering of this extension. The theory also postulates a gradient by which the ease or frequency of PK manifestation should decrease as the target system becomes less similar to the host brain. Of course, other brains are first in line on the similarity gradient. Among nonbiological systems, the theory predicts that more "brain-like" (or labile) systems, such as RNGs, should be more susceptible to PK than static objects like match sticks. That seems to be the case empirically.

According to the theory, psiads interact with matter for the purpose of creating a meaningful experience. This explains why poltergeist phenomena, for example, are not haphazard but express some meaningful psychological need of the agent. But static objects, in contrast to brains, are very inefficient vehicles for such expression. One

³ As I have noted previously (Palmer, in press), the PK interpretation of such events has been challenged by the intuitive data sorting model (May, Radin, Hubbard, Humphrey, & Utts, 1985). If this model is confirmed, true precognition may be required by data.

consequence of this hypothesis is that expression through static objects does not reduce greatly the intensity codings of the psiads. This might explain why poltergeist phenomena tend to be recurrent.

But why should psiads ever express themselves through static objects when brains would appear to be readily available? The theory postulates that such events represent a spillover from psiads with very high intensity codings. It follows from this hypothesis that macro-PK and poltergeist agents should be very intense, obsessive individuals, because what the macro-PK is a spillover from is intense interaction between the psiads and the host brain. This bombardment might be expected to occasionally result in epileptic or pre-epileptic brain states, which seem relatively prevalent in poltergeist cases (Roll, 1977). In some cases, added pressure for a spillover could be created by blocking of the psiads' expression through the host brain by means of suppressive or repressive defenses. Such defenses are often encountered in poltergeist cases (Roll, 1977).

Finally, the theory must accept the conclusion drawn by many parapsychologists that PK is "goal-oriented" (Stanford, 1978). This assumption arises from the fact that PK seems to be independent of task complexity, and that it is awkward to assume that in dice tests, for example, the location of the die at each stage of its fall must be monitored by ESP so that just the right "push" can be momentarily applied. The assumption of goal-orientedness is important for the theory in order to preclude the need for postulating true clairvoyance. For example, the PK interpretation of the Targ and Tart (1985) computer experiment (see above) requires that the subject be able to cause the right seed to be generated without knowing what that seed is. Had I wanted to, I also could have used goal-orientedness in the PK dice task as a substitute for the three MOBIA assumptions in my explanation of the remote viewing experiment of Targ et al. (1985).

Goal-orientedness implies that there is no mechanistic explanation of PK causality, at least not in the Newtonian sense. This is not a new assumption, because such a mechanism is already precluded by the theory's dualism. With regard to the psiads, causality is better conceptualized as teleological than efficient.

Postmortem Psi

The theory provides for postmortem survival because the psiads do not depend on the brain for their existence. When the brain dies, the psiads live on. In gradual deaths, the person lives in an increasingly stimulus-deprived environment, which inhibits the creation of a large number of new psiads and allows for the gradual exhaustion of old ones. That is not the case when death is sudden, including by accident or violence. This may explain why persons who died violently seem particularly prone to manifest in reincarnation cases (Stevenson, 1987). The panoramic memories that sometimes occur during near-death experiences (NDEs) can, in such cases, be interpreted as a frantic attempt by lingering psiads to exhaust themselves while the host brain is still alive.

In the following paragraphs, I will briefly outline how the theory accounts for four major types of purported survival evidence: mental mediumship, apparitions and hauntings, reincarnation cases, and NDEs.

Mental mediumship. The theory interprets the various communications allegedly from discarnate spirits as mobic impressions created by psiads. Although in most cases of mediumship it is reasonable to suppose that these psiads are from deceased persons, they can also be from living persons. As all psiads contain representations of the person's body concept, they can, by affecting the motor neurons of the medium's brain, mimic the vocalization or other behavioral characteristics of the communicator when living. The mobic impressions intermingle with mentation created by the medium's own brain and psiads, and to some degree influence the content of this mentation. Thus, communicators can appear to be a composite of characteristics of the real communicator plus bogus characteristics supplied by the medium to round out a full personality. Controls are no different than communicators, although the proportion of characteristics attributable to the medium tends to be larger in controls.

Mediums do two things to become receptive to the communicator's psiads. First, they process whatever information they can acquire sensorially about the communicator. These mentations function like Carington's (1946) "K-ideas" and increase the comparability of the

medium's brain states to those of the communicator as recorded in the psiads. Second, by entering a trance, mediums minimize the creation of their own psiads, leaving a clearer path for the external psiads to manifest. In the case of drop-in communicators, there is simply a chance correspondence between the brain states recorded in the communicator's psiads and the brain states of the medium during the session. Note here that similarity of brain states includes structural factors that are not necessarily reflected in common mentation or experiences.

The cross-correspondences (Piddington, 1908) provide a particular challenge to the theory, because they seem to involve creative planning by the deceased. According to the theory, psiads are incapable of such activity on their own. The theory proposes that different but closely related psiads from the deceased communicator manifested in the receiving mediums. Perhaps, for example, the psiads for the Hope, Star, Browning case were created when Myers was having some particularly charged musings on a piece of Browning poetry, and a few of them (which encoded very similar brain states) found similar opportunities for postmortem expression from several mediums who happened to be thinking of Myers. Integration statements, such as Mrs. Piper's reference to the words "hope," "star," and "Browning" having appeared in an earlier script of Mrs. Verrall, can be accounted for as MOBIA—in this example, from Verrall to Piper.

Apparitions and hauntings. The theory's explanation of these phenomena generally follows the telepathic theory of Gurney (Gurney, Myers, & Podmore, 1886/1970). Psiads from the deceased (or living) agent, which include that person's body concept, interact with the percipient's brain, especially the sensory cortex, in such a way as to produce a hallucinatory image of the agent. As the information in the psiad may not be sufficient for a full image, some content, such as what the apparition is wearing, might be supplied by the percipient's fantasy or expectation. The fact that the appearances so frequently involve a "crisis", such as death, follows from the fact that psiads associated with such crises have high intensity codings.

In haunting cases, the psiads represent experiences of the deceased that occurred at the same place that the apparition manifests. When

percipients come to these locations, their brain states become similar to those represented in the psiads, because they partake of similar sensory experiences. The theory predicts that hauntings are most likely to occur when the surroundings at the time of the percipience are similar to when the psiads were formed.

Collectively perceived apparitions are the result of psiads interacting simultaneously or in rapid succession with multiple percipients. This is no different in principle from a classroom card guessing experiment where a teacher attempts to send an image of a card to all the students in the class.

The fact that multiple percipients sometimes see the apparition at the same precise location in a room introduces a complication for the theory whenever the event represented by the psiads occurred at a general location other than where the apparition appears. One way the theory can handle such cases is to propose that the mobic input does not reach each percipient exactly simultaneously, and that the later percipients use possibly unconscious sensory cues from the attentional orientations of earlier percipients to judge the apparition's location. The brain then adjusts the hallucinated image accordingly. It is possible that some cases might require the assumption of mobic exchanges of such information among the percipients, as postulated by Gurney (Gurney et al., 1886/1970).

Reincarnation cases. Of the three paranormal interpretations of these cases discussed by Ian Stevenson (1987)—ESP (by the subject), possession, and reincarnation—possession is the interpretation most in line with the theory, although this term may not be the best label for what occurs. The theory proposes that psiads, usually from deceased persons, introduce past-life memories into the subject's brain by MOBIA. The interactions can occur as soon as the child's brain is mature enough to incorporate them. The input is experienced as memories because unlike, say, mediums guided by their Spiritualist beliefs, the child has no other context through which to interpret it. The psiads need not interact continually with the child's brain; once the memories come into being, they can carry on by themselves. At the same time, memories are continually being created from the child's own experiences, and these gradually form a personality of their own.

As this process matures, any past-life memories that are consistent with this native personality are integrated into it and the rest drop away. (Because the child is posited to have his or her own "soul" from birth, the theory can easily handle the few cases in which the child was born prior to the death of the previous personality—awkward data for the reincarnation interpretation.)

When the child visits the home and neighborhood of the previous personality, the perceptions of the new environment bring his or her brain states into conformance with the brain states recorded in the previous personality's psiads when the latter was at this location. As a result, new memories may be introduced into the child's brain. This is roughly analogous to what occurs in hauntings. Prior to the visit, the child would not likely have become paranormally aware of changes in buildings or people that had occurred at the location since the death of the previous personality, because the psiads record only information about events that occurred when the previous personality was alive.

The apparent transfer of skills to the child can be explained in part by proposing that the psiads seek out children who possess strong innate aptitudes for the skill in question, another basis for brain state similarity. Indeed, the theory requires some basis for why particular children are chosen for manifestation. The psiads then interact with the child's brain, perhaps making permanent changes in motor synapses, to create the actual skill. In the case of xenoglossy, whole language maps, encoded as contextual information in the psiads, might be transmitted.

As brains of males and females are known to differ somewhat in their structural organization, the finding that the great majority of the children are of the same sex as the previous personality is very compatible with the theory. The theory would also predict that in the few sex change cases, one of the individuals had characteristics of the opposite sex to begin with (e.g., a male person who was somewhat effeminate.)

A phenomenon in some reincarnation cases that poses a challenge for any theory is birthmarks. These birthmarks often reflect tragic events that befall the previous personality, such as a fatal wound, that would create psiads with high intensity codings and thus a relative likelihood of seeking postmortem manifestation. In such cases, the

birthmark on the child's body is at the same location as the wound and resembles it in appearance.

The most elegant way for the theory to proceed would be to propose that the psiads seek out children who will develop the birthmark anyway. Because the psiads incorporate the wound in their representations of the previous personality's body concept, and the birthmark has some representation in the child's brain, a basis exists for brain state similarity. However, the fact that the child and the previous personality often come from the same family or group of acquaintances creates a problem for this hypothesis, because the likelihood that the psiads could find an appropriate child with the unique birthmark among a small number of options is quite small. On the other hand, birthmark cases are extremely rare compared to the number of potential cases in the population as a whole. If this problem proves fatal, the theory would have to maintain that the psiads create the birthmark by PK on the developing fetus.

Near-death experiences. The world that psiads occasionally experience after death is the same world they experience before death, albeit through someone else's brain and perceptual apparatus. Thus, the theory does not accept the conclusion that NDEs represent some glimpse of the afterlife. On the contrary, the theory adopts the conservative view that NDEs are experiences of the dying host brain, an interpretation for which there is good rationale and much supporting evidence (Blackmore, 1993). Of course, the theory adds that NDEs also involve (nonphysical) psiads, which theorists such as Blackmore would surely reject.

Conclusion

Why do psiads manifest sometimes as past-life memories in children and other times as hauntings or the communication experiences of mediums? I suspect that belief systems have something to do with this. Stevenson (1987) has noted that reincarnation cases are most common in cultures that accept the philosophy of reincarnation, and the prevalence of mediumship phenomena coincides with the rise and fall

of Spiritualism in Western cultures. It would seem that it is very difficult for psiads to manifest in persons whose beliefs are inconsistent with the beliefs these psiads represent, either because there is insufficient brain similarity or because brain censors in the target person prohibit the psiads from achieving consciousness.

I have not been able in this short paper to address all classes of survival evidence or all the issues that arise within the classes I did address. However, I am not aware of any evidence that would contradict the theory. I suspect others are likely to be more insightful in this regard than the theory's parent, and I fully expect that they will point out to me logical gaps in the theory or data that would be awkward for it to handle. It then becomes my job to defend the theory as best I can or introduce modifications. The theory's fate will rest on my success (or the success of allies I might acquire along the way) in doing so. This is how things are supposed to work. Whatever the outcome, the winner will be our quest for understanding human life (and death).

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DISCUSSION

BRAUDE: John, first of all, I think your paper is really interesting and very thoughtful. But as you could have predicted, I have a few questions. Let me just lay out a few things that bother me about this. I don't even expect you to respond to them all now. I just want to indicate what I would regard as some trouble spots in this kind of presentation. Basically what bothers me about it, quite apart from the specific criticisms that you've made about things that I've said elsewhere, has to do with what I would consider to be a kind of fatal mechanistic residue in the theory. It comes up in the concept of a psiad and more specifically in the notion of a representation, which I'd say is the weak spot in cognitive psychology generally. It's often used in a way that ultimately turns out to have no meaning whatsoever. Let me just indicate the kind of problem that I think you are going to have to address sooner or later. It cannot just be enough to make promissory notes of the sort, "Well, we'll figure out how to flesh this out some time in the future." First of all, you need to specify whether every thought has a psiad. For example, will there be separate psiads for the

thought "I admire Smith. I like Smith. I like Smith but not enough to risk my life for him"?

PALMER: The answer is yes.

BRAUDE: Each one has a specific psiad?

PALMER: Sure.

BRAUDE: Well, you see, that leads to another problem; can different psiads or different representations of two different thoughts be represented by the same psiad? So, for example, suppose I'm thinking about Baltimore. As I'm thinking about Baltimore, I do so by conjuring up an image of a particular politician. That particular mental image, though, the very same mental image, the very same psiad or same representation could on another occasion be used while I'm thinking about people who lack the subtlety to appreciate Strindberg or things that are softer than plywood but firmer than cotton or things that even a mother couldn't love.

PALMER: I want to say a psiad would be created in each of those circumstances.

BRAUDE: But the point is, the same psiad can be associated with different meanings.

PALMER: Whatever meaning is available at the particular time is represented in that psiad. You may have ten psiads representing different variations of the same basic idea.

BRAUDE: So, the same psiad can mean different things?

PALMER: Not in and of itself. However, when it interacts with what is going on in the host brain, its manifest meaning could be partly defined by that.

BRAUDE: Well then, I find it a little peculiar that you are going to attach the kind of importance you do to something like brain state similarity. First of all, as I understand the way you are using it, a psiad is supposed to help account for similarity of meaning where you are explaining similarity of meaning in terms of similarity of structure. Quite apart from specific reasons for thinking that structure does not determine function, or in this case meaning, I would say that even sophisticated mechanists like Jerry Fodor recognize that you cannot explain brain state similarity of the kind you need simply in hardware terms. That is to say semantic properties in general can be realized physically in different ways. So that, the very notion of brain state

similarity that I think you want to rely on is not the sort of concept that actually can explain similarity of meaning of the kind that I think you are trying to capture.

PALMER: How far does that Fodor point really go? If I was a dualist, I would love someone to say that there is no relation at all between our thoughts and brain hardware. But surely there is some relation and that is all I need to assume. I would not suppose that my concept of a house is the same as your concept of a house, although it is surely more similar to your concept of a house than it is to your concept of the Cincinnati Reds baseball team. If our concepts of a house are not identical, then neither would our brain states be identical, even though they would refer to the same abstract concept, a house. Likewise, a psiad is unlikely to cause exactly the same cognition in two people. If a psiad is formed from my perception of a house and this psiad stimulates your brain, it will interact with what is going on in your brain at that time. Your cognition will not come out exactly the same as mine, because our brain processes at the time will not be identical.

BRAUDE: I don't want to pursue this ad nauseam.

GROSSO: John, I was fascinated by your paper. But I am puzzled as to the outcome or the implications for survival. Are you saying that we survive through the brains of other living people? That is what I thought I heard you say toward the end of your paper. What real cash value do you attach to that notion of survival? My other question concerns the notion of the intensity of psiads. Does this imply that only some people under certain circumstances survive? In other words, what are the implications of your theory for people at large? Do only some people sometimes survive for certain periods of time? What is the general picture, for the common man out there? You have a message. What is the message for the average person who believes and who is interested in knowing what his or her fate is after death? That is not quite clear to me.

PALMER: Let me say first, as I said in the paper, this is not necessarily a theory that I believe myself. I think it's good for survival research to have more theories, but I am a little concerned about this one being too closely identified with what I believe deep down. It is

based on fairly minimalist conservative assumptions, which I think is what was bothering Steve.

When you look at the theory's implications for survival, the key point is that persons do not survive; psiads survive, although psiads obviously have their source in particular people. In a lot of dualistic theories, for example in Carington's theory, the psychons have experiences by themselves; in this theory they don't. They can only have experience when they interact with the brain.

It is not what we normally think of as a personality surviving. It's a much more atomistic kind of survival. It is not the kind of survival I think we would like, or something we would choose.

GROSSO: It is still not clear to me. You say that persons don't survive according to your theory, but psiads do—and psiads are related to the notion of consciousness. Psiads are conscious?

PALMER: They have a potential for being conscious.

GROSSO: They have the potential. So, what is the relevance of all this to human beings? My question is perhaps a bit blunt. But I don't see how some aspect of my personality independent of my conscious center of being, which is the only thing I really care about when I think about survival, will reproduce itself or will reactivate itself through other brains, or through other contexts. It strikes me that this has rather trivial implications for the question of survival, as I understand it to be important to most people.

PALMER: I think the kind of survival that I'm talking about is, as I said before, and I don't know how to say it any better, different than the standard dualistic notion that there is some integrated personality that can have experiences outside the body and may somehow interact with the body. It is definitely a minimalist view of survival. In that sense, it is probably somewhat closer to what the materialists are saying.

OWENS: My comments are similar to Steve Braude's. I think a lot of the mental operations that you assume will be handled by the brain are not very well understood. I think that they are the reason why the Eccles and Popper Theory postulates a World 3 which you dismissed as not being important. These operations that I'm talking about are selective attention, contextual processing, integration, relevancy and meaning, and goal direction. All of those higher order mental

operations are very mysterious at this point. I once heard a biochemist say that the idea that DNA can account for all of morphology is the largest promissory note in science. I think the idea that the brain can account for all of these higher order mental operations is an even larger promissory note. And, to just make that assumption is really a weak point. I think that mental representations such as myths, scientific theories, goals, and higher order event structures are not very well defined. These are things that are very mental and to assume that the brain can handle them is something that cannot be assumed at this point.

PALMER: Of course, we don't know. What I am saying is that what this theory does is make certain predictions that the matters you address are going to be resolved a certain way. They may come out that way or they may not. Also, remember that I did attribute a number of processes to the psiads, particularly things that are related to what I call "quality of consciousness". I think that these cover a lot of the things that give a materialistic theory trouble.

OWENS: But in order to accomplish those kinds of mental operations, I think you need abstract mental codes. This is directly counter to a notion of a psiad. A psiad is not abstract and that is the essential problem.

PALMER: You mean psiads within the theory?

OWENS: Right. You keep saying that psiads can accomplish this.

PALMER: I am giving them a reality status, in other words.

OWENS: How they get that reality status is the question. How do they get goals and the ability to selectively attend and accomplish these operations where you need an abstract mental representation? I would say World 3 is the best way to refer to the scientific theory. Cognitive psychologists have postulated scientific theories, myths, schemas. They are not very well worked out. They are just the kinds of things that reductionist models cannot handle very well; it is contextual information processing.

PALMER: Let me go back to my original goal in writing this paper. I wanted to come up with a theory that was going to compete with a lot of other theories, and that would give the materialist the benefit of the doubt on as many matters as possible consistent with survival. We don't know yet whether these cognitive processes are going to prove to

be handled by the brain. Maybe they will; maybe they won't. Let's assume they will. What kind of a theory do you get making that assumption? I don't think we know enough to say categorically that the brain is not going to be able to handle these contextual problems. As for psiads, I don't see how the functions I have assigned to them require this cognitive ability of abstraction you refer to. According to the theory, this is a brain function.

OWENS: The ability of the psiads to be functional and goal-directed is the kind of intelligence that I think requires dealing explicitly with this notion of abstract cognitive representation. I don't think you can just assume that they can do this.

TAYLOR: First of all, I found something that you said at the very beginning of your talk quite intriguing from the standpoint of the history of parapsychology; which is, you seem to make some reference to the relationship between the brain and experience as if experience somehow communicates with the brain or with bodily functions through PK. Did you say something like that?

PALMER: Roughly.

TAYLOR: Well, to me that poses a very interesting and imaginative starting point for trying to address the mind-body problem. How does consciousness interact with the physical world? It is a curious historical assumption to claim that this kind of interaction actually happens through psychic phenomena, or PK. You start with that as the normative way in which people really make things happen—the relation of the material world to their personal experience. I find that particularly interesting.

But the other problem that I see filtering out through some of the other discussions has to do with the problem of representation. We normally assume that there is an objective world out there independent of the mind and that stimuli come in. We then make a reaction to those stimuli and form an impression in our mind. Therefore, there is the whole psychology of how we perceive the world of material objects.

One of the great postulates in science and the thing that disturbs me tremendously is the notion that causal laws exist independently of the minds that created them. The fact is that you are trying to create a conceptual cognitive theory about something which essentially is beyond cognitive capacities and yet somehow includes them. I wonder

what you would say about that? The last question is, if it's not inappropriate to ask, I would like to know deep down inside what you really do believe?

PALMER: I'm not sure I know at this point. That is the problem.

TAYLOR: William James said, "There is no philosophy without autobiography." The thing is, then, what is this that you are presenting here if it is not somehow a product of your own personality? What is your position?

PALMER: The fact that I chose to make this a minimalistic theory, I suppose says something. As for survival, I used to believe very firmly in reincarnation. Now, I honestly don't know. The older I get, the more confused I get.

TAYLOR: This may be progress.

PALMER: It very well might be. I do know and I think this cuts across some of the distinctions that we've been making, that I do not believe in free will. I believe the world is basically deterministic. That is one area where my theory clearly says something that I don't personally accept. This was an exercise in which I simply wanted to see what kind of theory I could get by going on this particular path and comparing it with other theories to stimulate research, which is what I think needs to be done within parapsychology.

I think some of the problems you were referring to earlier and what Justine Owens was saying about abstract representation have to do with a general problem that has bedeviled dualism for some time; how exactly does the mind interact with the brain. Obviously, it is not going to be a billiard ball kind of interaction. It is not something that you can think of mechanistically, but rather as a kind of teleological causation that you cannot translate into mechanistic terms.

TAYLOR: I was more interested in your statement, "The purpose of this is to stimulate research." That makes more sense to me in terms of what this is about. I would then ask, with regard to our experience of psychic phenomena or near-death experiences, "To what end?" In other words, what does more research do with this problem that we are struggling with?

PALMER: This gets into what I am probably going to say about your paper.

EDGE: Let me say, I take the problem of representation to be not a problem of interaction but more of a problem of re-presentation; that is, you have a state of the brain and then you talk about psiads. In what way does a thought represent the brain state? The map is not the territory. There doesn't seem to be any structural similarity. To me, at least, this is the problem of representation.

PALMER: Again, you cannot think of this in mechanistic terms.

PSYCHE AND SURVIVAL

WILLIAM G. ROLL

Psyche and the Oracle

When I was a boy living in Denmark my father would sometimes send me things from Chinatown in San Francisco—things you could never get in Copenhagen like boxes that only opened if you held them a certain way and other small marvels. Among the gifts were sea shells that would open when you put them in a glass of water and from which large colorful paper flowers would unfold. This is what I want to do today with the word parapsychology. Let's soak it in a glass of water and see what comes out.

"Parapsychology" is Greek not Chinese. *Psyche* enclosed by *para* and *-logy*. *Para* meaning beside, alongside, or beyond and *-logy* meaning verbal expression as in doctrine, theory, or science.

When our shell opens, between *para* and *-logy* Psyche is revealed. Psyche, the divine princess loved by Eros, rises from the waters like Venus. Today, the hermeneutics of a sea shell.

Our glass of water has become the Aegean Sea and we have found a being "so strangely and wonderfully fair that human speech [is] all too poor to describe her beauty, or even to tell of its praise," so says Lucius Apuleius (Neumann, 1956, p. 3), Psyche's biographer. Psyche is fresh and lovely but not born yesterday. Apuleius wrote about her more than 1800 years ago and she is probably a lot older. The fact that Psyche is so attractive that words cannot describe her creates a problem for people like ourselves who need to use written and spoken language on occasions such as this.

The gods were aware of the problem and devised a method whereby the inexpressible may be approximated by language. The way a deity may communicate with mortals is through an oracle—"oracle" from the Latin *orare*, to speak—such as the woman at Delphi who was a channel for the god Apollo. While she was seated on a tripod over a cleft in the rocks, from which mind-altering fumes may have emerged, Apollo would speak through her. Channels, we know, are not always clear and people who sought advice from the oracle often shook their heads and said, "That's pure Greek!" Perhaps she didn't inhale.

However, there was a group of people who always understood the oracle, or said they did. These were the priests at Delphi who would interpret the oracle for people in simple English, so to say. These priests, unfortunately, were not chosen by the gods. They were political appointees and often paid more attention to the earthly authorities than Olympian ones. That's still a problem, as we shall see. Anyhow to communicate with Psyche, we first need an oracle and then we can see about finding an interpreter.

The oracle at Delphi is down and it doesn't look as if it will be fixed soon, so we need to look for another. There are many people who seem to be intimate with the goddess, with Psyche. There are Freud and Jung; there are Watson, Maslow, Skinner, Rhine, and many others. Unfortunately, the psyches of these individuals often seem quite different from the psyches of the others. Or perhaps that is fortunate. In any case, where may we find an oracle we can all accept?

I suggest Springfield, Massachusetts, where Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary is published. True, Webster is not as exciting an oracle as Delphi, but he speaks with authority and in ways that we can comprehend. Also, he's a portable oracle.

Psyche reveals herself to Webster first, as the princess loved by Cupid—an alias for Eros. Second, Psyche reveals herself as soul, self, and mind. No wonder Eros fell in love with her. There is a large priesthood supposedly dedicated to the service of Psyche, to understanding her, to spreading her word, and to healing practices in her name. These priests we call psychologists. Psychology, Webster tells us, is the science of mind and behavior. Science, Latin *scientia*, having knowledge, is akin to *sciendere*, to cut. And indeed psychologists have cut something from psyche.

What they have cut is self, and also soul, the literal meaning of psyche. Like the statue of Venus de Milo at the Louvre, the psyche of psychology has lost her arms, and her nose is chipped too. She is still beautiful, but you can't hug her or at least she can't hug you back. We need for Psyche to become whole again.

The purpose to know the psyche as truly as possible is a purpose that engages and unites all of us. It has been my major occupation and preoccupation these many years. My efforts, some of you know, first took form in a complex theory that was the basis of my M. Litt. thesis

at Oxford in 1959, where I was a student of H.H. Price. Through the kindness of Robert Morris, it was later published (1975) as one of the volumes in the collection, "Perspectives in Psychical Research." The theory was simplified in "The Psi Field" (1964), my talk to the Parapsychological Association, when we met at Oxford, and where I explored a physical metaphor for psychic interactions. In a paper (1986) for this Foundation, I examined psi from the perspective of biological systems theory, and more recently (1990), I used the metaphor of the long body, a phenomenological perspective opened by Christopher Aanstoos (1986).

In each of these explorations the picture of psi has become increasingly simple. I now realize that what I have been exploring these many years is the ordinary, everyday human self: the everyday, extraordinary, miraculous human self.

The Meanings of Psyche

Let us return to the oracle. Psyche, Webster tells us, is self, mind, and soul. Let's begin with self, psychology as the study of the self; the self exploring the self. As Socrates had a daimon, each of us has our psyche. This makes psychology, or parapsychology, stand out from any other discipline. The final judge of any expression about the psyche is you, me, each man and woman, our experience of who we are, and what we can be. Psychology, the logos of the psyche, must not only match objective facts, it must also match subjective facts. If it does not, few will listen and fewer will learn. It is refreshing to see psi researchers like William Braud (1993), Keith Harary (1992), and Russell Targ (1993) relate their own psi experiences to their empirical research.

The self is the same as the I, and the I the same as the Latin and Greek, *ego*. This self, I, is the central perceiver, the eye in my lived world and the actor also. Give the actor a mask, a Latin *persona*, and you have personality.

The self is awareness, consciousness, experience. Sometimes awareness is altered or absent and we may then say that the self is altered, absent, unaware, or unconscious.

The eye and actor, seer and seen, has substance, heft, body. When I talk about myself, when I say I saw the news on TV and then went for a walk in the woods with my wife, I'm talking about an embodied self. This embodied self is always somewhere, some place; in my house in front of the TV, in the woods with my wife. The self is emplaced. It also endures. The body and its places last for a while. The embodied, emplaced, and enduring self unfolds in mind, the second meaning of psyche. Mind comes from the Latin (*mens, monere*) and Greek (*menos, mnasthai, mimneskesthai*) words for remind and remember and also the words for warn and spirit. Warn becomes aware, consciousness. More about spirit later.

Through memory, mind brings the past into the present and projects itself into the future. Mind and memory become meaning, an enfoldment of mind in things within and around me, the things of my world. This world is the ground for a figure, my figure. Things and people make up my ground and I make up part of theirs. The figure is embedded in the ground and the ground defines the figure. I am embedded in my surroundings and these surroundings say who I am. They are my transpersonal side. Mind is personal and at the same time transpersonal.

I am who I am because of my memory, my history. This memory is relational, connective. Memory implies an "of," my memory of father and of mother, of home and of school, of friends and of enemies, of pleasures and of pains. It weaves my mind, my self, my figure into a ground, a transpersonal matrix. My transpersonal horizon is as near or as far as the reach of my memory.

The Psyche as Psychic

We can now make another observation about the psyche. It is a truism but still needs to be said: The psyche is psychic. To say that the sun is sunny or that water is wet is a waste of good words. But to say that the psyche is psychic is to say something people need to hear. Let's go a step further and regard this statement as an axiom. An axiom is a proposition describing a self-evident truth, but a truism with

spunk. Axiom from *axioma*, to honor, and *agein*, drive. An axiom is accepted as is, with no call to reduce it to something more basic.

An axiom can be a seed of a paradigm. *Para* meaning beside or above and *-digm* meaning diction, expression; paradigm is an expression that gives an overview. A new paradigm can be revolutionary as when Copernicus rolled the flat earth into a ball circled by the sun and when Galileo stilled the sun and set the earth circling.

A paradigm that includes psi experiences could be equally momentous. To assert that the psyche is psychic is to assert that the self is connected to others in direct, unmediated ways. This means that what each of us knows and does at once affects what others know and do, and what happens in the physical environment. Values and behavior change: What you do to others, you do to yourself, so watch out!

Psychic experiences flow from the three connections of the self we have described. One, that the self incorporates others; two, that the self is embodied; and three, that the self is emplaced. (The endurance of the self follows from its embodiment and emplacement.)

One, the self enfolds or incorporates people and things I am close to. This enfoldment is an invisible link that connects people and things across space and time and that may result in what we call extrasensory perception and psychokinesis. From this perspective, ESP and PK take place within the psyche, not outside or beyond. Psi phenomena are only extra or *para* in relation to the picture of the self and body as separate from other selves and other bodies. This picture is a construct of old preconceptions, not of actual experience.

Two, the self is embodied. It breathes; it has a body with a brain. When I become aware of my connectedness with others in ESP or act on things in PK, my body and brain is engaged. In ESP my parasympathetic nervous system may be engaged; in PK the sympathetic system. Because my mind, my self, incorporates others, my mind incorporates other bodies. When these others are aroused by injury and trauma, my mind and body may be aroused. When they die, a part of me dies. Experiences of the crises of others, if these others are distant from me in space or time, we call crisis ESP, or telepathy, distance suffering.

Three, the self-mind-body is emplaced. I am now seated by the dining room table in my house. When I remember my past or plan my future I also see places, people, things; these make up the ground against which I am the figure. The figure and ground, my self and surroundings, in the past, present, and future is who I am. The places I walked and the things I hold are a part of myself. As the present becomes past this connection continues as memory. The places I have been remain part of my present and I of theirs.

When the place a person has occupied is then occupied by someone else, the second person may experience the figure of the first. This figure, without its familiar physical body, may appear as an apparition, a ghost. As in crises ESP, traumatic events, like sudden death or accident, may leave more enduring memories in places than neutral occurrences.

To repeat, the past is contained in the present. I know no other past than the present past, the past I can now recall. Like the foods I have eaten, it is the living sedimentation of my body-mind. This body-mind-place is not mine alone; it has a transpersonal dimension insofar as I exist for others and in others and insofar as they exist for me and in me. I may recall sitting in my dining room one year ago on a special occasion, a familiar form of remembering. I may also recall another person—as an apparition—who occupied this place before I came and whom I have only met through our shared space. This memory too is likely to be of a special occasion in that person's life, usually a painful one.

The latter form of remembering, as natural as the first, may not fit our preconceptions about memory and place and so we speak about haunting instead of about remembering. Haunting is a transpersonal form of memory, a remembering of someone I may never have met. Haunt and home are derivations of the same word. You might say that memories are like homing pigeons; they stay around the places they were hatched. All homes may be haunted though it is only the persistent and insistent place memory we call a haunting.

Similarly our objects and belongings may carry our imprint and reveal us to others. A person may then be discerned through an object from that person's place. The practice of obtaining information about people by means of their objects we call psychometry, not in the sense

of psychological tests, but in the sense of psychic imprints on physical objects. Psyche as mind; meter as measurement; hence, psychometry is mind in matter. Regrettably psychometry has gone from the laboratory scene. But it is used regularly by psychic detectives and other psi practitioners. If the intention is to affect someone's mental or physical health by means of a personal belonging, this may result in psychic healing or harm, practices known to anthropologists as contagious magic.

Since place and person are interwoven, a change in the person may lead to a change in the place. We call this psychokinesis, the effect of intention on the physical environment. When my body-mind is disturbed, my place too may be disturbed. Under some conditions, which are not yet fully understood, these place disturbances sometimes take the form of recurrent spontaneous PK or poltergeist.

Thus, the self-body-mind endures. I have a past, a memory, a history. As I look ahead, I discern and try to form a future for my individual self. This possible future, like my past, is transpersonal, and interwoven with intentions and tendencies beyond my individual aspirations; and so it is uncertain. But sometimes the many streams come together in one vision, a precognitive dream, or impression. It is still subject to change, and when it pictures injury to those who are part of our psyche, it may enable us to avert the danger.

What we have done so far is simply to show that to have a mind is to be psychic; to be a person is to be transpersonal. My experience of myself tells me this, and the words I use to describe myself, drawn from a familiar list, tell me that others' experiences of themselves are like mine. Finally, psychic phenomena validate that the self, the psyche, is indeed psychic. Our minds-bodies are connected not only within the range of the familiar sense organs but also beyond.

The things that are connected have all kinds of colors, values, properties, feelings, directions: light, dark; good, bad; pleasurable, painful; attractive, repulsive. We are connected as closely to our worst enemy as to our best friend. Both dwell in us, and make us who we are. The attractive and repulsive sides of the psyche are reflected in positive and negative ESP, psi hitting or psi missing, in psychically meeting or avoiding people and things.

This body of connections can be approached from many directions. Merleau-Ponty (1962) found the opening in perception. "When I turn towards perception and pass from direct perception to thinking about that perception, I re-enact it, and find at work in my organs of perception a thought older than myself of which those organs are merely the trace" (pp. 351-352). David Levin (1982-1983) equates "the thought older than myself" with Jung's "collective unconscious" or, as he prefers, the "primordial body" (p. 223).

Psychic experiences reveal the flesh of this primordial body, of Jung's collective unconscious, as that of the living Earth with all her beauties and blemishes. For psychic experiences show that memories and meanings inhabit the world of people, places, and things. Experiences of memories in matter, of hauntings, point homeward, not to unearthly spirits. This too is what the term tells us for haunt means home.

The Body of Psyche and Eros

The awakening of this primordial body into light and consciousness is our awakening, our seeing, and its evolution or dissolution is our doing. These two sides of our being, the seer and doer, we sometimes call our feminine and masculine sides. The feminine, receptive, attractive; the masculine, active, attracted. These opposing and connected aspects of our self are reflected in ESP and PK. ESP as passive, receiver; PK as active, transmitter.

The conscious development of our feminine and masculine sides, or rather the possibility for this development, is the theme of Apuleius' story of Psyche and Eros and of two recent recollections of the same story, one by Erich Neumann (1973), the other by David Michael Levin (1982-1983). Eros, Levin suggests, is the name for "The felt sense of wholeness constitutive of body-in-movement ... Eros is a metaphor for movement," (p. 213) and, we can add, a metaphor for psychokinesis, mind-movement. But psychokinesis, though intentional is not necessarily conscious. Movement, kinesis is transformed by Eros as is his sexuality. "Eros," according to Levin, "is not just a figure of sexual embodiment...it bears within itself the divine madness of the

urge to realize a more spiritual nature, more attractive to Psyche's dream...the reaching out of great compassion" (p. 233). Going to Merleau-Ponty (1964) Levin finds the embrace of Eros and Psyche in "...the total continuum made up of all the lived relations with others and the world..." (pp. 140-141).

In the terminology of Jung (1956), the psyche is collective and "access to the collective psyche means a renewal of life for the individual" (p. 260). The collective psyche, we need to add, is also corporeal and emplaced. If we approach her in a lively and loving way, Psyche's body, the world, will be enlivened and renewed. Each day will be Earth Day.

Until now we have sketched a picture of psyche as self and mind and we have shown that psychic phenomena are part of that picture. We have naturalized and normalized the paranormal and thereby also shown that the psyche can be explored empirically as well as experientially. In other words, we have placed the psyche at the center of psychology and psychic phenomena at the center of the psyche.

Psyche and Science

The psyche is both personal and transpersonal and both sides must be addressed in our experiments and investigations, if these are to succeed. All too often the psyche we attempt to engage is like the Venus at the Louvre, she has no arms, and does not perform well. The living psyche embraces people and places. If we take account in our research of the transpersonal dimensions of our subjects and ourselves, our findings will be more meaningful to everyone concerned and probably more significant, in both senses of the word.

Soul and Breath

We come now to the third and final meaning of psyche Webster presents us with, to soul. Soul is akin to spirit, and spirit is the same as *spiritus*, Latin for breath. Like mind, soul has a personal and a transpersonal dimension. Webster calls soul "an immaterial essence, or

animating principle, or actualizing cause for an individual life." In its transpersonal form, soul "reflects a spiritual principle embodied in human beings or the universe as a whole." Since my mind and body include the minds and bodies of others, their breath, body, and spirit are mine also. In this way I have lived before and will live again.

Psi and Survival

The body is a living thing and it is a dying thing. It is composed of cells with a life and with a death. In the body, living entails dying and death brings renewal; without dying there can be no living. This too is true of the psyche as we have pictured it. The psyche is embodied, and bodies die, but because the psyche consists of many bodies, it persists after the death of the individual body.

What about the individual mind? Will you or I survive? We will and we won't, according to the present image. If the psyche is not restricted to an individual body but incorporates other people and things then we would expect to survive within that larger life. Small consciousness would be absorbed in a larger consciousness.

This is not the theory that has guided most survival research. In studies of mediumship, post-mortem apparitions, and rebirth memories, the researcher has usually looked for the continuation of a small mind that identifies itself with a small body. The work has not been successful; attempts by survival researchers to communicate with the deceased is rarely met by a reciprocal interest from the other side. It is not difficult to see why. The small mind does not exist before death and therefore cannot be expected to emerge afterwards. Sometimes images of the dead and shorter or longer strings of memories are evoked but usually only among their places and people, that is, where place memories may be retrieved.

Our view of the psyche and of life after death has been too narrow, and we are confused about life and death. Death has been placed outside life, as the end of life and therefore to be avoided, while death is actually part of life. Look around, life continues, and it continues because of dying, not in spite of it. Then imagine no-death either in the

form of continuations of individual bodies or of interferences from spirit entities in our affairs. Hell on earth would have a new meaning.

We have postulated the existence of an interpersonal, embodied, and emplaced psyche. Since the psyche is not identified with an individual body, we have also postulated its continuation after death. Is this continuation conscious? The theory says so but what do the facts say? The living members of the psyche are clearly conscious, at least some of them, some of the time. What about the dead ones, people whose individual lives have come to an end?

How to say if someone or something is conscious? This is impossible on empirical grounds, that is, by observation. There is another way of knowing, participation, experiencing the process of dying. This is how each of us shall ultimately know whether consciousness continues—or not know.

Some people, a large number, are convinced that they have participated in their own dying. Near-death experiences have been attributed to disturbed brain processes, but these presumably could not account for veridical out-of-body experiences associated with NDEs nor for the increased psychic awareness reported at the time, and also when the person has recovered.

NDEs seem to illustrate three selves, and the transformation of one to the other: an OBE self, a psychic self, and a universal self. The journey often begins with an out-of-body experience, a sense of occupying a body, or point of view, distinct from the physical body. The OBE perspective is usually narrow and visual, like the body's, and the state of consciousness is similar to the state of the familiar bodily self. The OBE self may feel drawn through a tunnel or other metaphor for transformation to a place of lightness and psychic connections. Here the encapsulated OBE self expands into psychic union with loved ones, dead and living. There may be a life review where past events are experienced simultaneously. Hurts that the person caused others may be experienced as the others experienced the hurts. On this level, the distinction between self and others dissolves, Eros is united with Psyche.

If the NDE is not cut short, a further transformation may occur. The transpersonal self may be drawn to a place or being of overpowering love and light. Before this too there often is a transformation, perhaps

pictured as a river that must be crossed. When this happens there can be no return to the body, the psyche would dissolve and all identity would be lost; that is, the person would die a death that is felt as total life. At this stage the journey is often aborted. The NDEer returns to bodily life, unafraid of death, more loving, and with a more developed psychic sense (Ring, 1984). The union of Eros and Psyche has become lived reality.

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DISCUSSION

BRAUDE: Bill, by the way, I like the idea of a small mind. That's something I had previously associated only with game show hosts! I have two questions. First, I don't understand why veridical OBEs can't be accounted for in terms of ESP and creative visualization. And if I understand, you are offering a kind of reincarnationist view that there is a finite number of psyches, presumably, but they are associated with different small minds at different times. Is that right?

ROLL: I look at reincarnation as a kind of haunting, remembering place memories.

BRAUDE: I don't mean this as a fatal objection or anything of the sort. I just never understood this.

ROLL: I don't object to fatality. I accept death.

BRAUDE: I understand. If I understand this view, then there are going to be fewer psyches than there are small minds with which they are associated. So as the human population seems to have grown extensively over the centuries, I don't understand the relationship between the original stock of psyches, such as it might be, and the number of small minds that seem to proliferate.

ROLL: From the perspective of this theory, a small mind is an illusion. It is probably a necessary illusion. In other words, it is the idea of these bodies possessing individual minds which I regard as a biologically necessary illusion.

BRAUDE: But the number of persons and personalities is not illusory.

ROLL: Oh, yes. In other words, the reality I regard as the embodied, emplaced psyche, partly because it is embodied, shows a number of characteristics of bodies. It expands. It multiplies. It extends. But the idea of separate distinct individual minds, I reject. I don't think it's the case.

BRAUDE: So, you and I don't have genuinely distinct centers of self-awareness, for example?

ROLL: Your sense of self-awareness is mistaken, Stephen. I've often told you that. But he never, ever listens!

BRAUDE: It's a living.

EDGE: It's so small!

BRAUDE: I don't want to belabor this, but there are a number of distinct personalities. This room is filled with a number of distinct personalities and presumably a number of distinct centers of self-awareness.

ROLL: No. We are distinct and indistinct. From one perspective, from the point of view of biological life, we experience ourselves as separate. We have to. We couldn't cross the street if we didn't experience ourselves as biological beings. But on another level, on the psychic level, we overlap. We are connected, and these distinctions fall away.

BRAUDE: Well, what is the "we" when you say "we experience ourselves as distinct"?

ROLL: Well, now you see our language, our terms, reflect our Western philosophy which is Cartesian in two respects. First of all, the mind-matter distinction; and secondly, that the world consists of entities. It's a Cartesian/Newtonian construct. And it's mistaken.

BRAUDE: Wait. I will belabor this.

ROLL: No, you shouldn't.

BRAUDE: I know of a Zen nun who was trying to cultivate the impression that she had no self, so she would never use the personal pronoun "I". There are several things I've never understood about this. For example, how would she explain her experience of hunger and the fact that feeding her body would make a particular hunger sensation, whether she wanted to call it hers, disappear; whereas feeding someone else's body didn't?

ROLL: No.

BRAUDE: I mean, it seems to me there is that kind of center of self-awareness that still needs to be accounted for.

ROLL: It's difficult because language is built for one level of experience. What we are dealing with are other levels. One way that has been helpful for me is to regard the self, the small self and the big self, as a sort of complementary relation. Both are real. But they are never real at the same time. For instance, right now I experience myself as an entity in conversation with you, and you experience yourself as an entity. From that point of view it is true. But from another point of view, it is incorrect. When we shift to the other perspective, the connectedness, the psychic perspective, you cannot

make this distinction. It is false. It is parallel to the particle and the wave. Yes, it's true here; no, it's not true there. That is the way I think in my own mind so that I can conceptualize this. Steve has spoken enough now, don't you think?

LAWRENCE: I would like to make some comments with reference to near-death experiences. One of the issues I think that has come up is: How are the near-death experiences going to fit into the realm of parapsychological research? In some ways people have talked to that, specifically medical and health care professionals who have now dealt with these people. It seems to be somewhat tangential to parapsychological research and even called "business as usual," or the response of a dying brain. I guess I would take a position that it is not. There is something that is going on and I think it would behoove all of us to work together based on the different paradigms that we have, if you are talking about the need for new paradigms, to integrate this. For example, the issues raised by Susan Blackmore on if it's a hallucination or oxygen deprivation, etc. We have had some cases where as far as we're concerned that patient had died. There was no question in our minds that there was no pulse, no blood pressure. It was not a dying brain; it was a dead brain. These patients came back. That is under research at this point in time, but it certainly is something to think about. I think the large numbers of patients who have had this experience are saying that this is real to them. This is not a hallucination. We don't understand that. I think it needs to be somehow looked at and looked at in terms of what the phenomenon is—what those patients experience. And then: How does it fit, or not fit? But I think it's seen as tangential at this point.

ROLL: This was what I was attempting to do, to fit near-death experiences into the picture of the psyche. As far as I can make out, in near-death experiences you have an actual experience of the psyche. You have an actual experience of the transition from being an individual to being a multiple; that is, in the near-death experience there are two deaths. The first death is a death of the little mind, or not the death but the transformation into a larger connected telepathic mind. In other words, a particularly vivid example to me is the past-life review where you may experience everything simultaneously. That's a very transpersonal and a very psychic vision. The judgment or the

evaluation which is made has no stigma attached to it. There is no guilt. But you experience what you have done to the other people, your hurt to others. Now you are the other people in these near-death experiences. You experience the hurt that you caused yourself, as it were. The near-death experience is the most vivid experiential expression of the psyche.

LAWRENCE: Except I think that the life review is just one component of it and a relatively rare component. The other comment that you made about the feeling of peace and love, that is usually not something that happens later in the experience; that is usually something that happens immediately into the experience. So, they have this feeling of connectedness and yet they are still visually seeing what we would consider to be normal reality. So, I think there is a lot more work that needs to be done to look at what those stages are. What are the tighter definitions to distinguish near-death experiences from plain old regular out-of-body experiences, if there is such a thing? And what do those different components mean?

ROLL: These out-of-body experiences during the NDE are very, very interesting. I remember one lady who had a very, very rich near-death experience. She described to me how out in the hallway she saw her daughter and her husband and she was disturbed because the daughter was wearing mismatched clothes. The husband had rushed from the home, just picked what was on top of the laundry basket, and the daughter had mismatched clothes. The mother was very disturbed about that in the near-death out-of-body experience. To me, that is precisely the point of view anybody would have in the ordinary state of consciousness. Since my teens, I have experienced out-of-body experiences. This is really one of the major things that got me into this field. Aside from being out of the body, what stood out most about these experiences was that the self I was, the self I experienced, was more or less indistinguishable from my everyday, ordinary self. It had very little noetic quality. It was my separate, ordinary self. What excites me about the near-death experiences or the full near-death experiences is the transformation of this self into something wider and richer. You could not imagine after the tunnel experience and this paradisiacal landscape, that people would be worried that a spirit is wearing the wrong kind of dress. Issues like this have become

meaningless in the face of being intimately and telepathically connected with the other.

GROSSO: I just want a little more clarity on the difference between the small and the large self. First of all, I'm wondering, how you distinguish between the two? Is the large self an expanded version of the small self? Is there continuity between the two selves? Is the larger self a more inclusive version of the small self? And what bearing does this have on the question of "what survives"? I keep coming back to this critical question. What survives? Does the small self? Does it disappear? You seem to imply in your remarks that the small self vanishes into the larger self. I'm not quite sure what you mean by that. What is it that might survive?

ROLL: Let's take it step by step. The small self is defined as the two selves, the three selves, or the four selves that are now engaging each other in this room. At the time of death or in other enlightenment experiences (it doesn't have to be the near-death experience), this is changed to a more inclusive self. It can be gradual enlightenment or sudden enlightenment. The whole thing changes when you are included in that self, you are not included with your limits. In other words, it's like a cell in the body suddenly realizing that there is a whole body. "It's not just me, a little blood cell. I'm part of a big thing."

GROSSO: But there is still an "I" there. There is that nuclear sense of "I" that retains its identity through this experience.

ROLL: No. It doesn't.

GROSSO: It doesn't?

ROLL: No. It achieves a new identity, Michael. It achieves identity of the psyche of a larger thing.

GROSSO: Well, is it eclipsed, annihilated, lost, disintegrated forever, or what? That's the point I don't get.

ROLL: Yes, it is. I'm sorry. All of us have been digging through this material for decades. The evidence for individual continuation from mediumship or from apparitions provides no real evidence for the continuation of an autonomous entity. When you look at our level of connectedness, you see that on that level, we want to have the cake and eat it too. We think we are so wonderful as individual entities, that surely there must be some place in the world for the continuation of these egos. Now, our traces continue. For better or worse, we continue

to affect others. But the ego is lost. That means there is no judgment anymore. It's just the way it is.

GROSSO: I'm still not comfortable with that. It sounds to me that you are describing a connectedness in which individuals disappear. So, what is connected after the individual has disappeared?

ROLL: Well, what's connected in your blood, in your body, Michael?

GROSSO: In my body my cells retain their function, their identity, their elaborate distinctiveness even though they are part of a more inclusive reality. The total body is an expansion of the cell's identity. But the cell's identity is retained in the context of that larger reality.

ROLL: But, Michael, your cells die. You are dying right now.

GROSSO: So my body is going to die. I'm trying to find out what is going to happen to me after. You see, that's what the whole discussion is all about.

ROLL: No, no, Michael. You are doing very well, though you are dying all the time. Your cells are continuously dying. But you are doing very well. You are drinking; you are eating; you are making new cells.

TAYLOR: I would like to speak to something that Madelaine Lawrence brought up a minute ago, which is also related to this other question. It has to do with my critique of what I consider to be outmoded methodologies and conceptual frameworks in psychical research. I think that most of the problems of personality are not going to be solved from a psychological or a parapsychological standpoint until we begin to take cognizance of this whole process, as you were indicating, of anabolism and catabolism, the fact that we are constantly making cells and cells are constantly being broken down. It seems to me that when the breaking down process overtakes the building up one that death really takes place. Even if there is no activity in the body, the brain, or the heart, the fact remains that as long as the building up process is still going on in the body, the life force is still active in the biological organism.

Another aspect of personality that needs to be addressed is our ability, as normal individually functioning organisms to biologically separate self from not-self in the antigen antibody response. It is very clear that there is a biological mechanism for identifying who we are

versus who we are not as far as health and biological survival is concerned. That leads to the other even more intriguing question of how the body identifies that which used to be itself but is now no longer itself,—how the body knows when dead tissue needs to be sloughed off. There is some biological mechanism of personality discrimination going on in there as well. So, however misguided our conceptualizations of materialistic biology may be, the fact is that these are processes which we know play some role in the philosophical issues that we are raising here.

As for the philosophical issues, I would like to return to the problem of representation to clarify a point we started to bring up before. We live in a material and rational world that presupposes that there is a world of objects independent of the senses and that there are laws independent of the mind. Whenever anyone speaks about the field of parapsychology, it seems to me that there are two different epistemological frames of reference that get thrown into the same verbal stream of understanding. That is, when you want to be scientific and find evidence, you adopt the attitude that this world of objects is independent of the senses but then you try to use the methodology of the physical, natural, and social sciences to get at these more ephemeral and extended experiences. I seriously question the possibility that there is a reality independent of the mind. Not that the mind solely creates it, but that in the history of human consciousness there has got to be some relation between consciousness and science and mathematics. From a scientific standpoint, we have, therefore, created a kind of narrow band of control over material reality and then redefined the world as if that narrow band was really always there. So just to bring this diatribe to a conclusion, I believe we are going backwards trying to make the present kind of science explain unusual facts. There needs to be a radical new look that must overtake science and its methods, in order to be able to approach the types of phenomena that we are talking about.

ROLL: Let's just hold it there, because I think you are absolutely right. I also think that biology has a very interesting conceptual framework, particularly systems theory. If you add the mental perspective, the mental dimension, the psychic perspective or dimension to systems theory, then on different levels there would be

different states of consciousness and different experiences of space and time.

TAYLOR: I am thinking about an idea expressed by William James in his *The Principles of Psychology*. There James raises this issue about the role of consciousness in the evolutionary process. He challenges the idea that what we are trying to do in a material sense is to search for where consciousness appeared along the evolutionary spectrum in the biological evolution of the organism. He said that it equally could be possible that consciousness was there from the very beginning. Consciousness did not arise *out of inert matter*, but in fact may have co-arisen with it. Only by the process of objectification have we separated the two and denied the reality of one of them.

ROLL: I think that's another very good point. If there is no sharp distinction between mind and matter, mind was there to begin with, interwoven with matter. If physical scientists miss this point, they cannot fully understand the universe. According to some physicists, for example Hal Puthoff, who's also a parapsychologist, empty space is filled with energy. If we deny the Cartesian distinction, it is at the same time filled with mind. The more you expand into matter, the more you expand into mind, into consciousness, into yourself.

TAYLOR: I believe that also applies as far as the body is concerned. I do not think that consciousness resides in the brain. I think it resides in every cell of the body. Scientific explanations which simply go back to brain processes do not suffice to begin to describe the nature of our experience. Epistemologically I'm struck by the fact that the subject matter of experimental psychology, once it has jettisoned everything that it did not think was legitimate science, became primarily vision and hearing. It seems to me that the experimentalist attitude has created a psychology based upon what is at the forefront of its methods. Consequently, methodology has been allowed to define the subject matter of psychology. In that sense, psychology has become not much more than a colossal elaboration of ego.

ROLL: Well, that's true. Precisely the same is happening in parapsychology. The experimental methodology of parapsychology is behaviorism. And behaviorism is another word for Newtonianism.

TAYLOR: The scientific epistemology of psychophysics still prevails. That is one of the reasons why parapsychologists cannot address the question that Madelaine is raising; the experimental model is still derived from psychophysics based on laboratory experiments and the 19th-century German ideal of pure science.

ROLL: We have to have a new methodology to match our subject matter.

EDGE: The moderator has a chance to come in here. Was I correct in interpreting what you said about precognition is that it is essentially induction?

ROLL: Yes. Probably plus PK, but still basically induction. In other words, to me precognition is prediction with a wider database.

EDGE: That has been achieved through this field?

ROLL: Yes.

EDGE: Going out?

ROLL: Yes.

EDGE: Throughout ourselves.

ALMEDER: Bill, I know you only had 30 minutes and it's hard to tell a big story and give all the arguments, but I'm concerned about some of the reasons you might have for some of the conclusions you assert. Starting at the beginning, I want to know whether I will survive my death. You say that the person is an embodied self, but does the pronoun "I" refer to the self embodied or the embodied self?

ROLL: Well, again, it depends on which level we are talking. But when we are talking here, usually the "I" refers to...

ALMEDER: The self.

ROLL: Yes.

ALMEDER: In the body. So, the question is whether the self survives. I have heard you saying different things. You were telling Stephen that it is an illusion to think you have a self. Then I heard you say, "Well, whether the self survives or not is a question of whether it's connected with a larger self." Let's come back to Michael Grosso's point. You are definitely convinced of the idea that the individual self does not survive, but what I need to know is why would you say that? What's the reason?

Secondly, how in heaven's name do I know whether I am connected in such a way as to be one of the bigger selves or part of the bigger

self? I mean, I have trouble understanding that. At the end of the treatment *On the Soul*, Aristotle raises the question of what the "I" refers to. He knew that his mind survived; thinking survives. But he didn't know if his body was going to. Do you define the self in terms of the person, in terms of something that had a body and a mind?

But then the question was "Well, what happens to me?" I think Aristotle's point had to be "me", the thing that has both a body and a soul, a body and a self, that is no longer. What happens is consciousness survives. But if you are somewhat Platonic, like I am (and I think some other people in this room are) there is this question of individual consciousness and the self. If you say it doesn't survive as an individual, it has to have all these other things going and I would like to know what the reason is.

ROLL: I don't want to lose you, because I'm getting confused here. Let me just try to answer you before you add something else. Your point is very, very good and very, very important. What I would like to suggest is that you, as you sit here, are really transpersonal. You are an extended being, an extended structure because of your connections to others, because of what you have ingested, and because of your relationships. You are a psyche. You have incorporated others. You have incorporated your parents, teachers, friends, and so forth. These beings are living presences within you. When they talk to you, it is a kind of telepathy. But really they are within you. Most of the time, however, we experience ourselves as an encapsulated entity. It is a matter of two types of survival: the survival of consciousness and the survival of some sort of entity. What I'm suggesting is that at death your experience of being an entity cut off from others is transformed, and you then become aware of your psyche. You become aware of your relationships, of your web of relationships. You recognize that your consciousness is changed, transformed, expanded. You recognize that as your "true" self. Within this larger self you have laid down traces in your relationships, there are traces from you all over the place. These continue, too. These traces are experienced also as part of the larger relationship. But there has been an expansion, a sort of explosion of consciousness. You are no longer the person you were before. In my opinion, you do not return. If you did, we would have evidence for it in these 100 years of survival research. There is no

evidence. The evidence is so extremely poor. What there seems to be are trains of memories, apparitional experiences, and so forth. But in terms of an autonomous distinct individuality as you are now, interacting in distinct ways with other people, there's no evidence for it whatsoever.

EDGE: My small self now calls for a break.

MORNING GENERAL DISCUSSION
DAY ONE

EDGE: The juxtaposition of these two papers is very interesting. We have John Palmer's paper where he says that there are essentially three possibilities: materialistic monism, idealism, and dualism; John chooses dualism. Yet I don't see Bill Roll fitting into any of those three alternatives. I see Bill, in fact, trying to do something else. I suppose the question is something like: What is going on here? Dualism certainly is the traditional understanding behind survival. What we have with Bill is another kind of approach. Does it make sense to have another kind of survival? Or are we limited to a dualistic approach in parapsychology?

BRAUDE: I would like to address that for a minute. When John said in his paper that there were three possibilities—materialism, idealism, and dualism—those do not exhaust all the possibilities. I think Hoyt's right that Bill Roll's position illustrates that there is at least one other option. It may be an instance of something which we could call a kind of neutral monism, perhaps. It certainly is a more traditionally mystical view, as I understand it, in the sense that (according to what Bill was saying later in his comments at any rate) there is no preferred level of description that we can appeal to here. That is, from certain perspectives it's appropriate to talk of small selves. From other perspectives it might be appropriate to talk about large selves. But if I understood what Bill was saying, whatever level of description we resort to we would do so for presumably decent reasons of some kind or another. Different levels of description might be pragmatically justified in different contexts. Maybe that's not what Bill was saying. But the standard mystical view, as I understand it, is that any time we try to describe nature, we are going to misdescribe it to some extent because whatever descriptive categories we use will involve a certain process of abstraction. And the process of abstraction means leaving out certain aspects of nature in order to focus on certain others. So, no particular way of describing nature could be inclusive. Even if that isn't what Bill Roll is getting at, that is another approach to the kind of problem that John Palmer was trying to address; that is, certain questions of survival could be addressed by means of an ontology that

doesn't insist that there is any preferred level of description. How we describe nature and discuss survival may have to be different from different points of view, no one of which is inherently any deeper than any other.

PALMER: I agree with Steve's point, that you can think of these things as levels of description. It's not that any particular approach is right or wrong. It just leads you to look at the world in a different way and draw certain implications from it.

As far as the definition of terms is concerned, I can tell you how I thought about it. To me the crucial distinction is, "Do you need two kinds of stuff or not?" A basic definition of dualism is that there are two kinds of stuff. Traditionally, one of those is physical and one of those is mental, although conceivably there are other possibilities. But do we need more than two? I got into an argument like this a couple of years ago at a conference with a Whiteheadian. It was being claimed by David Griffin, who was speaking for Whitehead, that his cosmology represented a fourth ontology. It seemed to me that it was more economical, more clear, to describe it as idealism or idealistic monism, because his basic stuff clearly had mental properties. It consists of occasions of experience which interact with other experiences in kind of a chain. It is an extremely mental kind of terminology, therefore, it makes sense to simply call it idealism. Although it's not the same as Berkeleyan idealism, it seems to fit that basic definition. It is a violation of the economy of terminology to treat it as a fourth category. Granted, maybe this is nothing more than a semantic quibble. There's nothing terribly wrong with adding another category, but it seems to me if we are talking about mental stuff, why not just stick with idealism.

EDGE: My own view would be to cast doubt on your basic question; that is, how many kinds of "stuff" do we need? An approach may be not to talk about stuff. What makes us think experience has to adhere to stuff? Can we build an ontology or metaphysics based on something that is not grounded in stuff? It seems to me that Whitehead was trying to do that although I'm certainly not a Whiteheadian.

PALMER: Well, that would bring you back to something like Heraclitus. Other than that, as long as there's some entity there and we talk about entities, then I think we also need to talk about "stuff".

EDGE: Well, as long as there is something. I'm not sure it's an entity. I'm not sure it's a "stuff".

TAYLOR: At the risk of being labeled a "toe-headian" or a "brown-headian" or a "red-headian," I understood what you meant.

MALE VOICE: A "block-headian".

TAYLOR: A block-headian, as in the uncarved block of Zen. I would like to propose an alternative category for purposes of transcending it. We've heard of idealistic monism, materialistic monism, and neutral monism as opposed to dualism. I think unless someone else speaks up here, I am the only pluralist at the table. James was a pluralist because he said monism could always be one of his options. He was making a serious statement. For a monistic interpretation of ultimate reality, you really only have one choice when it comes down to the final conclusion no matter what the proliferation of categories are. The dualistic position, the double aspect theory of the mind-body problem, has an alternative explanation, and that is that both views could be wrong. It could be something else other than that. James' point was to try and raise the issue of how we could have unitive spiritual experience and still a plurality of selves. He spoke about a so-called noetic pluralism. This is very Whiteheadian in the sense of what you were just describing, John, which is the idea of trying to account for the unity of phenomenological experience, at the same time the radical difference between individual centers of experience. I believe the pluralistic hypothesis is really quite significant for certain issues that we are dealing with. I think we basically operate out of different philosophical frames of reference and certain normative clusters of thought which can be identified. That's the reason why you said, "Monism versus dualism." I'm trying to propose another option—pluralism. First of all I have a sense that personality is not a unity. The normal state may, in fact, be an ultimate plurality of selves in whichever way we may wish to describe the "normal" condition. It may be because of certain actions of intention or will that we have the opportunity to unify different parts of personality in wider and wider domains. True transformations of consciousness, I think, have psychic phenomena as their essential by-product; they are guides along the way that indicate that this process of personality transformation is actually happening. I grant that it is a visionary, metaphysical, and mythic

language that I am using to describe this process because I don't claim to be a scientist or a clinician. I don't think I have any adherence to the worldview that those people espouse if they think that that is going to describe my reality for me. So I would just simply try to interest you in at least the pluralistic hypothesis as we continue in our discussion.

ALMEDER: I would like to talk to John Palmer about his concept of a psiad. I take it psiads do survive, and they are consciousness.

PALMER: Some of them survive.

ALMEDER: Some of them? Some of them. The good ones, hm?

PALMER: They incorporate the potential for consciousness.

ALMEDER: Well, which ones survive? What I'm getting at is you say a psiad is consciousness and consciousness survives. But this seems to me to be a classical form of dualism—causalistic interaction. I am trying to figure out why the rest of the paper goes on to give an alternative explanation of this data for survival that makes it such that you don't really need to believe in personal survival. What was going through my mind is that a lot of people have said that human beings are not simply reducible to discussions about brain states. If consciousness is distinct from brain states, then certainly a very important part of human beings survive: their consciousness and their dispositions to behave in certain ways and have certain mentality. What I was trying to get at was how this thing that you are proposing relates to personal survival? Are you saying that in so far as the psiad is consciousness, consciousness survives as a part of a person? Is the person, the besouled consciousness or the consciousness embodied? I'm unclear and am having a problem trying to figure out what part of me is surviving. Then again, I don't know what your reasons are for saying that. Why would you ever think that consciousness should survive unless you defined it as quite different from say biology? There are dualisms that are materialistic. For example, John Searle has argued that people do have mental states but they are just biological properties of the brain. He has no problem with talking about dualism and then talking about materialism. Then when we die, we just go. With Searle what you are in headlong flight from in contemporary philosophy of mind is the idea that there is something that survives that is essential to human personality.

Now, if you are a Platonist and you identify the self with consciousness totally, then you are going to have more than just person parts surviving; you are going to have real personal survival. But if consciousness is not part of the total of our personality, then I might be happy to have consciousness surviving if that is a major part of my personality. By the way, I wouldn't be happy to have any of this happen to me. I would be interested in having my body, of course. But you can't have everything.

TAYLOR: I think I would be willing to trade this body in; perhaps for another one after this one runs down.

PALMER: I'm not sure I like my theory's consequences either. Consciousness is purported to be a substratum. To the extent that my theory is mystical, it would be in that sense. In that sense consciousness survives. It might be analogous to space and the physical world. The psiads have or get, by virtue of being within this substratum, the *potential* for subjective awareness. So, if by consciousness you mean subjective awareness itself, that per se does not survive. What survives is the potential for having a conscious experience as a result of the psiads interacting with the brain. Does that help any?

ALMEDER: So, the consciousness doesn't survive. It's just the potential for conscious experience that survives?

PALMER: That's correct.

ALMEDER: How do you get that without consciousness? Is that in the body?

PALMER: Consciousness is not in the body. Consciousness is not something that matter inherently has. This is an assumption; like many assumptions in this theory, it is arbitrary. This represents a kind of top-down theorizing. Whether it is useful or not depends on its empirical consequences.

BRAUDE: I'm also puzzled by the connection between psiads and consciousness. One of the things you said is that psiads have no process analogous to thought, yet you give them various sorts of intentional states. You say psiads are motivated to attain experience through a receptive brain; they seek to actualize their potential. Now, all of that sounds "quasi-conscious" or "Quasi Modo"—I don't know, "quasi something." You try to explain consciousness in terms of psiads, yet you're attributing to psiads what look like conscious states, seekings,

motivations, and so on. So, you are giving them intentionality of some kind or other. I don't see how psiads are going to help explain what consciousness is in that sense.

PALMER: The best I can say at the moment is that I'm thinking of consciousness as a primal quality, something along the line of what you talked about in your book on PK. It is not reducible to other concepts.

TAYLOR: Returning again to the pluralistic hypothesis, I am thinking about a number of classic analogies both in James as well as in Buddhism, that have to do with this idea of moment consciousness. These systems present an epistemological analysis of conscious experience from moment to moment. The Buddhists particularly talk about the aggregation of conditions based on a completely different theory of causality than the one that we use here in the West. Therefore, you cannot superimpose normal Western causative thinking onto these views that they are describing. Buddhist psychology of consciousness has to do not only with an understanding of the way in which conditions aggregate and arise in material reality, but with how they aggregate and arise in the experience of consciousness and in the experience of personality. It is basically a pluralistic hypothesis which sounds strikingly similar to your idea of psiads.

PALMER: When you talk about moments of experience, maybe an analogy might be what happens in a movie reel where you have distinct frames and then as they go by at a fast speed you get cohesion.

TAYLOR: It is the analogy of the string of pearls without the string in Buddhist metaphysics. There is continuity but because there is no self and everything is continually changing, it is the karmic conditions of the past which are unconscious seeds to be burned out in the future. Basically, promoting the sense of continuity until liberation; then there is freedom.

PALMER: I think that is very congenial with what I'm trying to say. In fact, when I first wrote this paper, I had a little paragraph at the end on how my theory was linked with some mystical ideas, particularly the exhaustion of the psiad being related to burning off karma. But I thought trying to attach this theory to Indian religion was needlessly complicated, particularly because I was also proposing that there was no such thing as reincarnation per se.

TAYLOR: The Buddhists would agree with you.

PALMER: I think they would.

TAYLOR: It is a Buddhist conception. That is a radically different orientation and actually more compatible with the positivist, materialist, and scientific view than you are trying to present.

PALMER: I guess my own personal interest in Eastern religion tends to go more toward Hinduism. I merely thought of it in that way with a karmic connection. I understand enough about Buddhism to appreciate what you're saying. I could see that that is relevant.

TAYLOR: You might be interested in looking into this. It's the Doctrine of *paticcasamuppāda*—Doctrine of Co-dependent Origination.

ALMEDER: John, I'd like to come back one more time to this business of unconsciousness and the psiads. You don't seem to want to say, in fact you seem to be very reluctant to say that consciousness survives death. You say that it has a potential to. Now, my question is: How do you know that consciousness has any potential to survive death unless someone or some other consciousness has, in fact, survived death? Where do you get the inference that allows you to say that consciousness can survive death? Do you want to say that some have and that would be a basis for the inference? Am I right in saying I get a sense of your being very ambivalent about the question of personal survival?

PALMER: Well, I think it comes down to...

ALMEDER: Consciousness.

PALMER: What I'm ambivalent about is what you mean by personal survival.

ALMEDER: I mean, after you die, this item of consciousness will not suffer biological degeneration, for some time anyway.

PALMER: I'm trying to think of a way to say this that would make sense to you. Consciousness itself is defined as a potential for awareness; it is a substrate. In other words, it continues to exist but it is not personal. Consciousness gets personalized, to the extent that it gets personalized, when it in effect becomes incorporated into the psiad. That is the best way I can describe it. But, again, the psiads per se are not conscious, in the sense of having subjective conscious experience, until they interact with a brain. Now, you ask me, "Does consciousness survive?" I guess it depends on what you mean by "survive". The best I can do is to describe what happens, then if that

fits your definition of consciousness surviving, fine. If it doesn't, it doesn't. Because your kind of language is not part of my theory, we are facing a cross-paradigm discussion problem.

EDGE: As I understand it, what survives is the psiad so long as it is intense enough to survive. Consciousness comes when the psiads match up to or use PK on a particular brain. Then there is consciousness.

PALMER: Right, if by consciousness you mean conscious experience. You could easily spend a week of conferences trying to define what consciousness is. It's defined in many different ways. In this theory the word "consciousness" is defined as it would be in some of the mystical literature as an aspect of reality. This is different than in ordinary psychology where it's basically a synonym for awareness.

BRAUDE: Hoyt raised the issue of intensity. I wanted to say something about that, too, because that's another part of your proposal, John, that I had a little trouble with: the idea of an intensity code as if this could be some sort of straightforward or perhaps a quantitative measure of an experience. Do I understand, for example, that my dislike, let's say, of musical theater might have a specific and quantitative level that's either clearly the same as or different from say my dislike of the sound of a fortepiano? I mean, this is going to be the sort of thing that actually has an intensity level, some sort of straightforward level?

PALMER: I'm not sure how straightforward it would be. But in principle—and I stress the "in principle"—it would be quantifiable. I don't mean to imply that this is totally accurate. But if I were to try to apply a quantitative measure to it, it might be something like the degree of autonomic arousal that the thought presents to you.

BRAUDE: But excuse me, John. My like or dislike of something, just to take two kinds of states of mind, are dispositions. It may be true of me that I dislike musical theater and there may be lots of times where that's true of me, but I'm not having any particular current experience of disliking musical theater. So, it would be inappropriate to say that that state of mind has any intensity level whatsoever.

PALMER: For your state of mind at that moment, that's correct. What the theory talks about is parsing the stream of consciousness, to use William James's terminology. You're talking about dispositions,

and I'm not quite sure what their relationship is to the particular elements of the stream of consciousness. However, a disposition would not be the sort of thing that would be represented by a psiad.

LAWRENCE: I have a general question for both John Palmer and Bill Roll about how emotional responses relate to this. I think Bill alluded to that when he presented his point of view that people feel connected. For example, one of the first things that near-death experiencers talk about is how wonderful and how almost euphoric they feel. They have this sense of being total, feeling that they are connected to something else. They are fully appreciated, valued, and accepted. What they come back from the experiences with are the two things that are most important—love and knowledge. This seems to me two different things that relate to consciousness, maybe an emotion, if consciousness goes back to the real definition. I mean, the definition that some people use in terms of awareness. There is some distinction that could be made between cognitive consciousness, so to speak, and some kind of emotional response. I would be interested how these two perspectives relate.

ROLL: We were talking about observation and participation. Observation goes with science, observation goes with knowledge. You might say observation results in knowledge. In that respect you are still standing outside, gaining knowledge, talking about things, and so forth. Love is participation in this way of looking at things, that is, the experience of connectedness happening. In terms of the value of what we are doing or what we are exploring, you cannot have one without the other. You have to have both. You have to have both participation and observation; you have to have love and knowledge. We have made parapsychology so dry. We're taking all life out of it. Nobody pays any attention to us because we're so boring and so insignificant. What we are exploring is the most significant thing that exists, namely the human mind, the human psyche, the human soul. That is an intensely living and loving thing. The near-death experience unfolds this loving on several levels. I think a very significant dimension to our exploration is this participation, this loving. Maybe the mistake is to place parapsychology outside psychology. It should be in psychology. The psychic dimension of the psyche is the most important dimension of it. It is the connective, loving dimension of the psyche. Once you enter

that, you enter relationships with people, with things, and with environments. You see that the environment is something lovable. You see that people are lovable and capable of being incorporated into you. You are not complete without that incorporation. So, parapsychology is to me, or let's say full psychology, un-amputated psychology, the most significant exploration of all because it asserts that. It points the way to enriching our lives in immediate existential ways.

PALMER: When I look at Bill's ideas as compared to my own, I see some similarities and I see some differences. One very clear difference is that my theory is about as atomistic as you can get in this area, and I think Bill's is about as holistic as you can get. This remark is a preface to Madelaine's question because I'm going to take a fairly atomistic approach to the relation between cognition and emotion. There were two basic parts to the psiads: the content and the intensity. The content might be more analogous to the cognition, and the intensity might be more analogous to the emotion, certainly the emotional charge that a particular idea has. You cannot think of emotion in isolation. You have to think of it with respect to a particular cognition.

TAYLOR: I have two points I would like to bring up. One is the implicit assumption that I have heard raised here in the past hour, which I would like to bring out and to open up a little bit more. It has to do with what evidence there may be within the biological sciences to prove definitively that consciousness is produced by the brain. It seems to me that it is equally plausible to suggest that whatever descriptions the biological sciences give us of human functioning, they do not rule out the possibility that the brain is a transmitter of consciousness. At death the brain may simply no longer be the wireless that communicates the music through that particular source. I think it is an unwritten and unexamined assumption of reductionistic science to automatically assume that the brain is the producer of consciousness, when the facts do not contradict an alternative explanation.

The other point has to do with this interesting problem of thought and feeling. And, again, we're spinning conceptual theories about life after death. It stands to reason we would only think that thoughts would survive, because we are not being really experiential. We are sitting in chairs talking about it. We are not developing emotional relationships except indirectly, implicitly, and tangentially. So, there is no reason

why emotions should be a focus of our discussion unless we drag them in intellectually into this conversation. Then we are faced with the problem of how two things—thoughts and feelings—can exist simultaneously in the after-life. Feelings in this case become just one more intellectual category that adds to the present confusion. I am struck with the idea that we have such a tremendous problem while we are alive trying to figure out who we are. Who *are* we? What is it that actually survives? We have not solved the problem in the here and now enough to know what it is that actually is going to get to the other side.

ROLL: I think that has been a major problem of survival research. We have not determined what exists before death from a psychic point of view, from a parapsychological point of view. That has not been determined, yet immediately we spring over and set up experiments and hypotheses as to what comes after death. Nothing makes sense because we did not address the first question.

TAYLOR: We are merely plowing the sea.

ROLL: Coming back to what was brought up earlier by Steve Braude, the issue of complementarity relations. Philosophically and logically, the complementarity relation helps clarify our thinking and deal with contradictions. Human life is so paradoxical. I mean, we ourselves are such paradoxes. We have a right hemisphere, a left hemisphere. We have male and female features; we have excitatory neurons and inhibitory neurons, and so on. We are these contradictions. But if you can look at them as complementary, the contradictions disappear. Consider, for instance, feeling and thinking. When you are completely into feeling, you are not into thinking. When you're feeling about something or somebody and really into that, you're not into thinking about the person. When you're thinking about the person, you're not into feeling. Or, atomistic and holistic. Physicists tell us things are little bits and pieces under these conditions and under other conditions they are indefinite waves, maybe all over the place. So, atomistic and holistic also express this complementarity relation that upholds the world. I think in that way a lot of the apparent contradictions and disagreements that have emerged this morning may be resolved. Yes, it's this, and yet it's that. This under this condition; that under that condition. Mystical union—separate entities. You were

bringing in Zen before. There is one statement where that sort of thing is expressed in a Zen way. If you describe the essential quality of the universe in one word or two words, what would you say?

TAYLOR: *Tathata*, the Buddhist term for suchness.

ROLL: Or, "not two." You don't say "one." You don't say "two." You hold the middle. This thinking brings us into alignment with basic physical and biological concepts. Things can be contradictory and we ourselves are paradoxical because we are made from a world that is like that.

GLEN JOHNSON: I'm here as an observer and also a listener, which is a familiar role for me. That's what I do for a living—observe and listen to people talk. One footnote about the listening part. I was thinking that I needed the equivalent of closed captioning because so many words were flying by and I wasn't sure exactly what was meant. For example, words like "self" or "psyche" were uttered, but I never knew if these words started with small letters or capital letters. Was it small "psyche" or big "Psyche"? Sometimes you spoke of "small minds" and then I knew what you meant. And that led me to a larger (or smaller) thought. There's a little epigram in Maturana and Varela's *The Tree of Knowledge* that says simply: "Everything said is said by someone." As I listen to the things that are being said by someone or another here, Maturana and Varela remind me that all any of us can do is say things; that is, try to capture something that is pretty hard to figure out. As we muddle around making these sounds at one another, there's a danger that we may be seduced into thinking that we are really describing "what is", rather than just saying things to each other in our own fumbling and ignorance. There were a few jarring moments today when one speaker would respond to another as if some ultimate claim about reality had been made. I don't know that we are competent to say anything about "what is" when it comes to death. After all, the whole topic here is an experience that presumably we have not had yet. We will only know what death is, if at all, briefly at or just after the moment of death. So it seems to me that one very useful function of the moderator, if we can't get the closed captioning, would be to stop us every five minutes and have us take a big, deep breath to remind us that we are just someone saying things and that any clear, well-defined ideas about death will probably elude us by the end of tomorrow. I

think that what we can understand is a function of the states of mind we are capable of entering into. So, when we don't understand one another, sometimes it's the words we don't understand; but at other times we don't understand because we don't know how to get into the proper state. We really can't even get close to knowing what another person is making noises about if we haven't been in a similar state ourselves. I noticed that in the two presentations today, yours, John, was much more conceptual and depended on defining words, while yours, Bill, seemed to me much more evocative, emotional, and coming at us from the side. Those are very different styles of communication, very different ways of telling us something that you know. I was struck that initially so many more of the questions were in response to what you said, John, than to what you said, Bill—which suggests that perhaps it is easier to go at this with words and definitions and their clarification than it is to respond to something more nonverbal and evocative. But I think they are equally powerful ways to try to tell us about things. Somehow it would be nice if our format gave both styles their due.

EDGE: I think, in fact, it may be that Eugene Taylor will back into the same areas this afternoon.

TAYLOR: Eyes closed, backing in. (Chuckle)

BOYCE BATEY: In his *Diary of a Writer*, the Russian novelist Feodor Dostoevski says, "There is only a single supreme idea on earth—the concept of immortality of the human soul. All other profound ideas by which men live are only an extension of it." When John Palmer said, "The older I get, the more confused I become" and when Bill Roll said at one point, "I'm getting very confused" and when Steve Braude said, "I'm very puzzled by something" and Bob Almeder said, "I'm having difficulty figuring this out," it put me in mind of two men returning home from a lecture. One said, "I was very confused by what that lecturer said." The other responded saying, "I, too, am confused but at a very high level." It strikes me that the confusion here is at such a very high level. In dealing with matters of this ilk, it has always been my penchant to consider "both/and" rather than "either/or". In considering mind at large, each of the different modes of consciousness have their own internal validity and consistency. For me it is very much a focus of where consciousness is in this everyday

reality or in the mystical modes of reality where people experientially say, "There are no boundaries to my being. I am one with all that is." In those experiential modes of reality, which are ineffable in their nature and cannot be described, I agree that the reductionistic modalities of science are not adequate to deal with and explore what is happening. To do it in a scientific manner, a new scientific paradigm and approach is needed. That is very much an experiential way—you know by what you experience. Bill, as a meditator for many years, has accessed those levels of consciousness where he understands. For me the best criteria for evaluating these experiences is the test of the Nazarean, the fruits criteria. You know something by their fruit. You evaluate something based on its results. Those who experientially have died and come back to life speak with the authority of their personal experience. I have always trusted such people. Hallucinations in near-death experiences do not adequately explain the transformation that comes about in the personalities of those who have them. For me a reductionistic explanation grounded in philosophical materialism is an inadequate explanation when considering a near-death experience or an out-of-body experience to be a hallucination in concert with guided meditation or imagination. We need to seek a better approach to understanding.

BRAUDE: Just a quick caveat about how authoritative one's first person reports can be in matters of this sort. I think there are lots of things we all do and experience and about which our reports and our understanding are thoroughly unreliable. Just in everyday life we all experience fears and desires. And most of us haven't the vaguest idea what's going on. Our ability to understand ourselves depends on a lot of things, not simply having the experiences but also having an appropriate degree of conceptual sophistication to do something with those experiences.

EDGE: I think we have made progress today. We have raised confusion to a sufficiently high level. And it is probably appropriate that we take a break.

REVISING SURVIVAL RESEARCH:
PROPOSALS FOR A NEW PARADIGM

MICHAEL GROSSO

I have some thoughts that I would like to share with you on the great question of survival. Speaking for myself, I would agree with Carl Jung that it is healthy for the soul to form an image of death or a myth of death and life. I would like to put my approach to this whole subject in that context. I see the survival problem as a practical psychological problem. It is also a theoretical, scientific, and philosophical problem. But it is also in my judgement unique in that it is a practical-spiritual problem. So we have to come to grips with death. We are not talking about something that is remote from us. We are talking about something that is extremely intimate. We are all going to die. I am interested in forming some sense of how to deal with that. Before I get to the question of the evidence for life after death, I have two other introductory comments. One, I have always been impressed by Ernest Becker's (1973) *The Denial of Death* in which he argues that the inability of Western peoples to accept death distorts their psychology and has all sorts of intriguing political implications. At the end of his book he calls for a merger of science and religion. I have always felt that that was the point where he should have introduced parapsychology, particularly survival research, as a way of merging traditional religious claims and science. Another point I want to make is that there does seem to be a conflict between popular belief in that most ordinary folk do believe in some form of life after death whereas the scientific and intellectual establishment tend not only to disbelieve but to dismiss the whole idea, even repress confrontation with the relevant evidence. So again, it seems to me that parapsychology has a role to play to mediate between that popular need to ratify its belief and the intellectual aims of parapsychology. But where are we? For me, it has been an impasse. I have spent many years reading survival related research. I have also talked with a lot of people. I have not done formal research but I have certainly talked to a lot of people who have had impressive experiences. Moreover, I myself have had a number of unusual encounters. In fact, I described in a little book that I have

written called *Soulmaker* (Grosso, 1992) four distinct episodes in which I confronted something suggestive of a postmortem entity or survival. On one occasion, the most dramatic, I was attacked by an entity that seems to have been a ghost in a haunted house that had displayed itself to at least nine other people. I spent the night there and experienced several incidents. But in the culminating incident, this shadowy form came out of nowhere and engulfed me. There were other evidential features of the experience. What I am saying is that in spite of these personal encounters and studying the best literature on the subject, I am still undecided as to what I have actually experienced. So, I hover on the edge of belief.

What I would like to do is talk about our non-belief. For me at any rate there is a stalemate in terms of the question of survival. I would like to suggest about five procedures or proposals that would perhaps extend and develop current approaches to survival that might help to remove that sense of uncertainty and increase a sense of confidence.

Parenthetically, I might add, that I don't mind the sense of uncertainty. I rather like it, in fact. I don't crave certainty in this area. But what I do like and what I do enjoy is the fact that there is enough provocative evidence to suggest that a great adventure may await us after death. That is quite enough for me. So, although I can tolerate the ambiguity I still feel another side of me would like to pursue the question further and see if I can resolve the ambiguity.

I would like to state also the way I see the alternatives and what the evidence points to. It seems to me that there is some very strong evidence that suggests life after death.

The alternate explanation, however, to that evidence I think is equally interesting, namely that we human beings possess some extraordinarily subtle and largely untapped, unknown, and misunderstood powers that create the illusion of life after death.

Either interpretation is interesting: either we do survive bodily death in some sense or we have some pretty unusual powers. Whether or not these two alternatives are disjunctive or conjunctive is the great issue.

There are three reasons why I hesitate in drawing the survival conclusion. The first is the whole question of super-psi. I know that it has been argued that super-psi is not a scientific hypothesis because you cannot falsify it. Nevertheless, it does muddy the waters. My own

sense is that super-psi cancels itself out; in other words, the greater the super-psi, the less implausible the notion of survival.

The second thing that prevents me from accepting wholeheartedly the evidence for survival at face value is—to use a common phrase—the spell of the paradigm. Having been educated in our materialist culture, there is almost a psychological inability to accept the full implications of survival research because it runs contrary to so much of the intellectual milieu that I find myself inhabiting. I would not discount the power of this kind of social spell. It can be hard to resist. It is an extra rational factor that has influenced and shapes my attitude.

Finally, I do feel that when all is said and done the only crucial experiment is death itself. I doubt if I will ever achieve total certainty because not having had the experience of dying and having survived death, there is always room for doubt.

Let me just mention quickly my five suggestions or steps toward breaking the stalemate. I will try to suggest in what way these steps might help to alter our view of the evidence either way, for or against the survival hypothesis. First, I am going to suggest that we broaden the database. I believe there is data relevant to survival that has not been normally considered.

Second, I think it might help to look at the whole question of human survivability in terms of an evolutionary perspective. All our human abilities, our very existence, and this entire universe that we inhabit is an aspect of an evolving, time-driven, time-constituted reality. From the Big Bang 15 billion years ago to now the universe and everything in it has been constantly changing and evolving. Somewhere along the way the capacity for human survival has emerged. I think it might help to bear that in mind. I'll suggest a few ways how that may work.

The third point involves scaling down our epistemic expectations. John Palmer (1980) wrote an important paper in which he talked about parapsychology being a probabilistic science. I agree wholeheartedly with him. At most, I believe, we can achieve what I would call a scientifically grounded myth of transcendence or afterlife. That is as far as I am aiming. If we can do that in a way that is intellectually respectable, I think we'll have achieved something.

A fourth point is an attempt; I would suggest that some of us try to move from theory to some form of practice. That is to say from a kind

of passive observation and reporting of possible evidence of life after death to an active pursuit of what William Roll (1974a) has called "theta consciousness", those states or modes of consciousness that might be associated with a postmortem or extrasomatic mode of being.

The last point I won't say a great deal about. I think that parapsychology, particularly survival research, could increase its utility and its relevance to the world at large if it tried to build a bridge with what is known as the Immortalist Project. There are people such as Allan Harrington and Timothy Leary who are talking about ways of eliminating death by using whatever science we know, whatever science is possible, to extend human life and perhaps even eliminate death in some way. There are all kinds of physicalistic approaches to this. One of the things we might try to do is build those bridges to incorporate survival research and parapsychological research into a larger pursuit of human potential.

That is a quick summary. Now I'll go over some of the specifics. As far as the items I am about to discuss, in some instances the influence may be direct, in others indirect. The first item has to do with broadening the database. I suggest that broadening the database may weaken or strengthen the overall plausibility of the survival hypothesis. So, in addition to the classic types of evidence (mediumship, reincarnation memories, etc.), there might be new kinds of evidence emerging.

For example, David Hufford (1982), a folklorist, has written this fascinating book called *The Terror That Comes in the Night* about haggging. Haggging is also called nightmare: people wake up and they find themselves paralyzed. They hear footsteps. They feel presences. They sometimes detect smells. I have had the experience on several occasions and it is quite frightening. That is why it is called *The Terror That Comes in the Night*. It has a fairly well defined phenomenology. But what Hufford found was this is a widespread phenomenon and that it is essentially a paranormal phenomenon. At any rate Hufford was unable to come up with a normal explanation for it.

It is quite widespread. I find that in most of my classes, for example, at least 5 out of 20 students will report having this experience. Not a great deal of work has been done on this phenomenon.

The second category of phenomena that I think we need to look at more closely is the relationship between survival related data and transpersonal states of consciousness: the mystical, the shamanic, and the visionary experiences. Again, I think what might be useful here is Charles Tart's notion of state-specific knowledge. I am fully aware that it has all kinds of philosophical difficulties. Nevertheless, from a practical point of view, which was the starting point of my presentation, I think it is very important. Certainly, the near-death experience would be an example. People who claim to *know* that there is a life after death after they have had the near-death experience are examples of this state-specific knowledge. I stress there are difficulties, but this is important data that needs to be woven into the overall picture.

I refer to Roll (1974b) who has made the point that one thing we might do in the pursuit of the survival question is to look at states of consciousness that might be associated with an after-death state. This is, I suppose, what Bill means by the "big mind". The big mind or the extended self, is the something we can experience apparently under special circumstances. For those who have these experiences it is significant. It helps shape their view of reality. I think this material of transpersonal states of consciousness (and there is a wealth of it) should be brought into focus and juxtaposed with all the other types of survival evidence.

The next category of material that I would like to suggest should be looked at in relationship to the relationship to the survival question is what I am going to roughly characterize as ufological data or the data arising from the study of UFOs or unidentified flying objects. Much of the ufological data and the parapsychological data overlap. There are many points of contact, many phenomenological similarities. With the exception perhaps of Manfred Cassirer (1988), Berthold Schwarz (1983), and a few others, by and large most parapsychologists seem uninterested in this area of research. Or if they are, they don't express it a great deal. On the other hand, some ufologists, for example, Jacques Vallee and John Keel, seem to be aware that there is a paranormal element in ufology and that you need to look at the relationship between these two areas.

This is the way I would like to frame the problem and how it relates to survival. The problem seems to be analogous with survival. The more you immerse yourself in ufological data the questions you come up with are: Are we dealing with external nuts and bolts, independent, autonomous spacecraft or beings invading our space from another world? Or are we dealing with some type of psi-mediated projection of terrestrial agents or human agents? That is the great question as I see it. It is interesting that so many people are convinced that there are external agents encroaching upon our reality; whereas some of us look at the same data rather analogously to survival data and conclude that it may simply be the result of extraordinary human abilities.

I must say at this point in my study of the phenomenon I am inclined to believe that most of the ufological data are psi-mediated projections of terrestrial agents. I wonder to myself, "Well, maybe the same incredible cleverness and creativeness of human beings is at work in the production of apparent survival evidence."

I want to just point out for those of you who are not familiar with the ufological data, it's a rather messy, complex business. First, you have these sightings of lights and discs. Carl Jung (1964) wrote on this subject and postulated the possibility of them being psychic projections.

The second distinct category of UFO-related effects are the so-called contactees. These are people who flourished in the 1950s. They claimed not only to see lights and discs in the sky but to be in contact with extraterrestrial beings. I will come back to that in a moment. But that is a distinct class. I would say that nowadays the contactee movement has been taken over by popular channeling. Nor would I want to completely eliminate the popular channeling data as relevant to the survival question.

A third and more menacing and uneasy category of phenomena have to do with alien abductions. Not only are these discs and lights entering into our environment and not only are people in contact with them, now there are reports of alien abduction. John Mack (1993), who is a psychiatrist at Harvard, has taken up this study. He has concluded that there is a distinctly unique pattern to this experience which suggests some kind of invasion of an exterior reality. He does not say what it is or where it is from. But it is a shocking and a disturbing reality and

one which he simply claims does not fit into any psychiatric category that he is acquainted with.

Associated with these three categories are other categories of data which often come under this heading. There is a whole category of phantom animals, Bigfoot, and Marian visions. If you look into the literature, all of these things turn out to have striking paranormal features.

But let me quickly compare some phenomenological characteristics of UFOs and psi-related effects. First of all, they are both agreed by those who seriously study the phenomena to be anomalous in the sense that there is no normal physical explanation for them. Many UFO phenomena and occupants have ghost-like properties. They appear and disappear. They have unusual luminosity. They pass through solid matter just like ghosts and other psi-related phenomena. Animals tend to respond in the vicinity of UFO sightings, ghosts, and other psychic phenomena.

There is an interesting collection of photographs of Marian visions, for example. In Zeitoun, Egypt there are some well authenticated photographs. There are some photographs of flying saucers. And, again, one wonders: Where are these coming from? Are they photographs of real entities, independently objective entities? Or are they, as Jule Eisenbud might suggest, the products of human thoughtographic abilities?

We find a lot of malfunctioning of machines in the presence of UFOs as is often found in the presence of psi agents and psi-phenomena—cars, phones, even reports of radioactive traces. Whenever I read about these radioactive traces, I think about Helmut Schmidt's (1970a, 1970b) experiments where he shows that human subjects can bias the behavior of radioactive processes. So, my mind leaps to the thought that maybe the potential lies in human beings to produce these effects. Levitation is widely reported. There is some good evidence for levitation in the parapsychological literature and there are lots of reports of levitation phenomena in the UFO literature.

Finally, most people claim to communicate with space aliens as they do with ghosts, by telepathy. All this leads me to believe we are dealing with something that is certainly related to the paranormal and possibly may have bearing on survival.

The fourth category I think we need to look at is the physical phenomena of mediums, saints, avatars, and shamans in relationship to the survival question. This might open up a new way of looking at survival. Michael Murphy (1992) has pointed out in his recent massive volume *The Future of the Body* that extraordinary human abilities may shade off into the ultimate ability, which is to survive bodily death. On the other hand, it might work the other way around. I suspect that Steve Braude would argue somewhat differently, that these extraordinary abilities could be invoked to explain away the survival evidence. But either way, by looking more closely at those connections, I think we are going to get a clearer picture.

To conclude: if we can come up with a respectable myth, a myth grounded in empirical reality that we probably survive human death, parapsychology would have a great service to offer the world at large. I think this is possible but I also think we have to be clear about scaling down our epistemic expectations.

To compensate for this scaling down, I would suggest that we attempt to move into exploring states of consciousness and modes of experience that might take us into this other world. If there is an afterlife, there must be another world, another mode of being that is coincidental and contemporaneous with this life. Maybe we can crash the barriers and explore the "next" world now even if temporarily, and get a taste of what it's all about.

The ancients did it. Plato defined philosophy itself as the "practice of death". I think that idea is due for revival. The Eleusinian mysteries were an experimental psychedelic cult designed to induce, as far as I can make out, a near-death experience resulting in this state-specific "knowledge". I know Raymond Moody (1993) is attempting to actively make contact with ghosts through scrying. I think it is an interesting new approach. I think the state-specific approach to survival is something we can explore to help remove the sense of uncertainty and the sense of doubt. Embark on the adventure here and now. We may never resolve with intellectual or apodictic certainty the truth of life after death. But in the process of exploring actively these modes of being, we might learn something very interesting.

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DISCUSSION

TAYLOR: About your comment concerning this whole idea of eliminating death, don't you think that from a standpoint of the technological wizards that cloning and frozen embryos represent an example of this?

GROSSO: Yes.

TAYLOR: In other words, we are not talking of it in terms of transpersonal psychology or states of consciousness.

GROSSO: That's true.

TAYLOR: But still basically the same thing.

GROSSO: That is not the only thing. Nanotechnology, for example, is talking about actually reversing the aging process, whatever the techniques are.

TAYLOR: But it is a myth that lives even in the reductionistic environment.

GROSSO: If it helps us deal with our mortality and extends human life, I have no problems with that. I don't have a religious antipathy to materialists.

PALMER: I am very sympathetic with your basic point. It is very similar to the point I was making in the paper of mine that you referred to. I was talking more about astrology, and you are talking more about UFOs. I'd like to make a more general point that gets into the question of how we define our subject matter in parapsychology. What happens not only in parapsychology but in a lot of other fields as well, is that the phenomena you consider within your domain are determined to some extent by the implicit or explicit theories that you bring to the task. Because of the particular way we have traditionally conceptualized and theorized about psi, apparitions are relevant but UFO phenomena are not. One criteria of a good theory is that you can explain a fairly large number of disparate phenomena with a relatively small number of concepts, provided they are falsifiable. Thus, I think it might behoove us to take off the blinders and look at some of these currently discarded areas.

My last point concerns one area that you didn't mention and it has always fascinated me why we ignore it. That area is demonology. It seems to me whenever we are talking about possession, we think of it in terms of a person: Patience Worth, George Pellew, Sharada, or whatever the previous personality is. We tend to ignore some very powerful cases of people being possessed by the devil. I wonder if there is some psychodynamic reason why we ignore these cases. I would suggest that we might want to study a few demonology cases and see how they fit in with our current conceptions.

GROSSO: I am not surprised about the backing off because it is kind of unsavory dealing with devils. But I would just comment on this shading of one type of phenomenon into another area. One folklorist I

can think of, Peter Rojcewicz (1987)⁴, has written an interesting paper showing how there is a subset of UFO-related phenomenon called "Men in Black". These Men in Black, mysterious beings that appear on the scene of UFO sightings and carry on in intimidating, sinister, and sometimes supernormal ways, have all the phenomenological earmarks of traditional devils. So, again, that raises the question: Are we dealing with some kind of process that gets culturally and symbolically reinterpreted according to our expectations, culture, and so forth? So, I agree with you that that is another set of data that needs to be looked at but I can understand the reluctance to get involved in devil investigations.

OWENS: I agree with you that near-death experience should be looked at more with respect to the issue of immortality. The common wisdom is that it does not provide convincing evidence. I agree with that. But that doesn't mean that there is convincing evidence that it never will. It seems to have become quite popular to just write it off. I think that that is a big mistake.

The other comment I wanted to make was on the old hag. I have talked with David Hufford about that phenomenon, and he agrees that a good explanation for that is the muscle paralysis accompanying REM sleep.

GROSSO: Really? That's not what he has in his book.

OWENS: Well, I talked with him after the book. He made a presentation at the University of Virginia. He had since talked with some physiologists about that, as well. It is not that it explains the whole phenomenology. I also wanted to say that the structure of the featural consistency that you talk about is true, but it is not an iron-clad thing. Because it is a phenomenon that is associated with REM sleep, it is a mixed state where you have both REM dreaming sleep and more awake conscious awareness; then it's typical. There is the possibility for lucidity which is to become aware that this is the kind of process that it is. I myself had this experience. I was doing lucid dreaming

⁴ Rojcewicz, P.M. (1987). The "Men in Black" experience and tradition: Analogues with the traditional devil hypothesis. *Journal of American Folklore*, 100, 148-160.

research at the time, and I was very familiar with the physiology of REM sleep. I figured out that that was what it was. When it was happening to me, I thought, "Aha! This is the muscle paralysis associated with REM sleep" which completely changed the tenor of the experience. It was no longer terrifying at all. It was sort of a playful altered state to be in. At that point I had pretty good control over what took place. There is a whole range of possibilities in that state even though unexamined the old hag phenomenology is consistent.

GROSSO: My understanding of the phenomenon from my own experience of being hagged, to use that somewhat dramatic terminology, is that I have been awake, that I have not been asleep. Clearly, I wake up, I'm paralyzed, and I hear the footsteps.

OWENS: But what I'm saying is that your body is still partially asleep. Your muscles are experiencing the inhibition that your mind is much more awake. It is normal waking consciousness, but you're in a mixed state. Narcoleptics have this experience, also. They'll fall into REM sleep. They'll be utterly terrified because they have this mixture of what's really happening in the room superimposed with this other kind of imagery and they can't move. But then they can learn to not be terrified because they're educated about what's happening to them physiologically. They can alter the phenomenology substantially.

GROSSO: You may be right. It may be that this is not an additional challenging experience relevant to survival related phenomenon. I don't know. I'm just saying that it needs to be looked at more closely.

OWENS: I wouldn't rule out the sense of presence that accompanies it. I'm not saying that.

GROSSO: You're not ruling it out?

OWENS: No. I'm partially explaining it but not explaining it away. I'm not saying that we understand it completely. I'm just adding to what you said.

ROLL: Michael Persinger has an interesting observation in relation to these nocturnal experiences. I don't regard this as reductionistic, I just see it as placing experience in some additional context. Late at night, nocturnal melatonin disinhibits the brain and enables us to have curious experiences and perhaps to do curious things psychokinetically.

Then there is this business of radioactive traces that you brought up. There is also the possibility of magnetic fields being associated with

curious phenomena. In a study by Michaeleen Maher and myself, we found (or she found as she was the one who used a magnetometer) that haunting experiences in a Japanese restaurant tended to be in the places where people had more pronounced experiences. In a later study Dean Radin and I found indications that ionization radiation might be associated with psychic occurrences. The possibility was first brought up by Paul Devereux who discovered that sacred stones and caves, which are associated with unusual experiences, are also mildly radioactive. Michael Persinger found that UFO phenomena and haunting phenomena tend to occur along geological fault lines where there would be strong magnetic fields. This is an area that really needs to be thoroughly investigated.

ALMEDER: Is Bigfoot relevant to survival phenomena?

GROSSO: Only in so far as it is one of a family of animal apparitions that have been reported. Cryptozoologists are serious scientists who think that there is a missing link or some evolutionary missing link that is floating around out there as a real animal. Others have reported their encounters with these alien animals, including the Bigfoot types which have ghost-like phenomenology. So, I am suggesting there is a parallel with survival research. In survival research you have mysterious apparitions or apparitions of apparent beings (in this case human beings) who are construed by some to be external entities that have intruded themselves into our environment. On the other hand, we sometimes think, as informed parapsychologists, that maybe these apparently external events or intrusions are actually the result of human psychic abilities. That is the point. I know it sounds a little comical the way you posed your question, but that is the connection that I'm trying to establish.

BRAUDE: I would just like to suggest that in exploring these different areas of possibly relevant data, we keep in mind that we should perhaps be conducting cross-cultural studies and anthropological studies as well because it is not clear to what extent the evidence might reflect rather localized belief systems. Two things about the literature on dissociation have driven that home for me. One is, cases of multiple personality in Brazil are such that in virtually every case there is at least one alternate personality who claims to be a spirit of the sort that one would expect to be described in Brazilian Spiritist religion. Also,

in the literature on hypnotic anesthesia, many patients reported anesthetic regions that didn't correspond to any natural physiological region of sensitivity. So, for example, a patient might have been anesthetized in a band around the arm, which didn't correspond to any natural physiological area but one that the patient expected to be anesthetized.

EDGE: Let me ask perhaps a more abstract question. It relates together a couple of comments. It may, in fact, be in a wild sort of way a transition into the next paper. You suggested we should come up with a scientifically grounded myth for survival.

GROSSO: My feeling is that is the most we can really plausibly hope for.

EDGE: You kept saying that the question "Do UFOs really exist?" becomes an imperative question. I guess the question I'm asking is: Do those two things, the emphasis on myth and myth-making with a kind of literalizing implication of the idea, go together? For instance, tying in to what Stephen Braude said, virtually all initiation rituals of the Australian aborigines (and I assume that they are not unusual in this respect) mimic death/rebirth experiences. Now, the thing we would want to say is that this is part of a larger myth. We don't ask the question "Do they really die? Are they really reborn?"

GROSSO: I see your point. I should have made myself clearer. I'm using the word "myth" in a fairly specific sense. The word myth has multiple meanings and connotations which can mislead people. I am using it in a Platonic sense. Plato would often reach a point in a dialogue, in a discussion, where he would say, "Well, I can't provide a compelling argument any more for a particular item." Then he would try to convey his idea in a story and an image. He would qualify it and say, "This is what probably will happen." I'm using myth only in referring to probability. And that is perfectly compatible with some literal interpretation of postmortem survival. We may literally survive bodily death in some significant personal way. But I'm saying perhaps the best we can come up with is a probabilistic account of that event, a myth. Perhaps I'm using the word in a rather eccentric, if you will, Platonic sense.

LOUISE NORTHCUTT: I just wanted to add that the story of the Resurrection is a myth that a lot of people take quite literally and is therefore something that is of psychological comfort.

GROSSO: I'm not saying the sense of myth that I'm speaking of is not psychologically comforting. It is, if you need that comfort, but it is also grounded in some realm of probable fact.

BETTY BUDLONG: I have worked with many people nearing death and have been amazed at the number who see people who have gone before. These are not people who are disoriented, though it is termed "hallucination" by the medical profession. I believe they see who they tell me they see. A 90-year-old woman, for instance, saw her mother. A 70-year-old woman saw her Cherokee grandmother coming for her and knew she was going to die soon and she did. She was very rational and oriented. I give this credibility.

DEAN RADIN: Since one of the issues in any investigation is asking the right questions, the question that has occurred to me which I had not heard asked before is whether there is death after life after death? If, in fact, there's some kind of life after you die, do they then worry about dying themselves? It raises the specter, if I can use that word, suppose some day we develop the phone booth where we go in and can get onto the other side. Will we find that as we open the door, they're coming in our direction with the same concern?

BOYCE BATEY: The American philosopher Josiah Royce has said that in the history of philosophy there have been no greater empiricists than the mystics. They test the reality they experience within the crucible of their own being. In a sense Dr. Lawrence LeShan did that, saying that "After 90 years we parapsychologists have asked the question 'How does psi occur?' and have not received the answer. My experience," he says, "has been we are asking the wrong question." Then he began to ask another question: What is happening at that time when veridical paranormal cognition occurs? When he asked the great psychics and mediums such as Eileen Garrett, Arthur Ford, and others, "What is happening at that point in time when you do receive veridical paranormal cognition," they all said the same thing: "I am one with the other person" or "one with the place where clairvoyance was involved." In his mind there was in history a whole group of those who experienced being "one with," and those were the mystics. So, he

then experientially began using the psychospiritual technologies of the mystics—meditation and contemplation—that enabled him to go into higher states of consciousness in which he had the same experience that all mystics through history had. All mystics come from the same country and speak the same language where experientially they are one with all that is. All time is now; all space is here. He began experimenting in bringing healing to others when he was in this state-specific reality, an experiential oneness, holding in consciousness those in need of healing from tumors, cancers, abdominal surgery, and they were healed. It was a way of testing the validity of the internal consistency and validity of this state-specific consciousness.

MORTALITY AND SELF-REALIZATION

EUGENE I. TAYLOR

*"There is more in all the world than dreamt of in your philosophy,
dear Horatio."*

William Shakespeare

In the course of the next thirty minutes, there are three interrelated ideas that I would like to weave together for discussion. The first of these is my view that psychic phenomena exist as a by-product of self-realization, not an end, and for that reason, not the mere replication of psychic events in some controlled experimental setting, but self-realization should be the proper subject matter of research into the paranormal. Second is the idea that active exploration of the subconscious in some way simulates or actually brings us closer to the death experience. In both cases, personality transformation is the result. And finally, the main point I would like to leave you with is that while psychic phenomena and near-death states may be real, it hardly occurs to most of us, when we attempt to describe them to our neighbor or to construct a science about them, that our descriptions may have little to do with actual experience.

At the very least, in the end I hope to have left no doubt about my view that the totality of our experience in the immediate moment far transcends our conceptualization of it; that the symbolic capacities each one of us has constitutes an essence extractor far superior to any man made method or apparatus for measuring reality; and that in the final analysis, not scientific data, but our immediate experience is the doorway to an awakened consciousness, the realization and clear articulation of which constitutes one of the most important challenges facing any legitimate science of the future.

I would like to begin by recounting two personal events about our mortality. The first concerns the death of my maternal grandfather at the age of seventy-nine. I was seventeen at the time, attending high school across the street from the rest home where he stayed. You should also know that he had lived in the same room with me for a year before he went in there, so we had developed something of a personal connection. The day he died the authorities would not permit me to leave school when the rest home called to say he was failing, so

I went over immediately at the last bell and arrived just moments after he had passed away. My mother met me in the front waiting room and asked me if I wanted to see him. I reflexively said yes.

What happened next came very quickly. He was still in a room with six other patients, but his bed was surrounded by a screen. The nurse who showed me in suddenly walked away and I was immediately confronted with a lifeless body. I did not feel the presence of the other people just beyond the screen. Instead, I was hypnotically focused on the figure in the bed. I spontaneously sought for the person I knew and, in a whirl of ever-widened telescoping sensations, the answer I got was that he was both there and not there. He was not in the body, but I sensed that he was present. Well then, I asked myself, where was he? It was at this point that I had an oceanic experience. I felt as if my horizons expanded incredibly fast into some farther reaches which had no end. He did not speak to me, there was no voice, only communion. I suppose I was only in there for a few minutes, but I had lost count, as it was a time transcendent moment. I live with that moment to this day, as if the past was not dead, as if there wasn't even any such thing as a past, because that moment for me is now the eternal present.

The second event concerns the recent death of my father this past Mothers' Day. If there are Fates at work in the World, or if there is a Divine personage synchro-nistically rolling the dice, surely such forces were symbolically at work for his death to have occurred on that occasion. I will spare you the details, except to say that my father had been mortally ill for five years, during which he had survived, even recovered, from heart surgery and multiple operations. Then, despite the agony which preceded it, he left this world in no pain, a completely changed man who all along, it turns out, had been courageously unafraid of his own death.

His eminent demise was expected by the family, but the reality of his passing, its enormity, its finality, nevertheless radically changed my consciousness. My state was profound, a hyper-suggestible and surreal condition—the kind of which psychic events are made. I saw visions, heard voices, foretold events, transported objects, had out-of-body experiences, and in general understood that our run-of-the-mill, business-as-usual state of mind was a complete illusion, despite the fact that I was hopeful to get back there as soon as possible. No fact could

help me. No amount of objective information would suffice. I had no theories. I was beyond theory. Well, yes I did. Actually I had many theories, but, of course, none were the right one. I could only exist in an infinite sea of emotion.

I am telling you this because there is likely no one among us who has escaped these experiences. Their relevance to the present discussion is that when they come to us they are among the few most important events that shape a person's life. Usually we can count the number of these experiences on one hand. They have primacy over all else. They are the benchmarks of our unfolding personal destiny.

Further, they put scientific facts in a light not normally conceived by all the textbooks of experimental method and all the pundits of high culture combined. They remind us of the important distinction made by Western and Eastern philosophers alike, what William James called the superiority of immediate "acquaintance with" versus simply "knowledge about" something. The Buddhists speak of *paramartasatya* versus *samvritisatya*—mere factual knowledge of the world as compared to the direct transcendent experience of totality.

We tend to forget that experience is primary and scientific knowledge is at best only an approximate model of reality, a probability statement about the norm, a working representation and not the actual reality itself. Even in science, the meaning context always has to come from within. Mind always has to intervene. Even the most exact measurement has to be interpreted by someone.

Think, on the one hand, of the scientist who chooses his subject matter because that is where the grant funding is; or the investigator who, before he even launches his research, formulates his hypothesis by eliminating large parts of experience because they are not testable; or the researcher who is confronted with conflicting results which nevertheless require a final judgement. In the last analysis his choice will always be based on personal sentiment.

On the other hand, we who are the recipients of its largesse have taken the scientific method and reified it into a worldview. We have sometimes unwittingly, but more often with eyes wide open, bought into the assumption that only by objective methods can truth be known. And, perforce, it is only a short further step to the larger metaphysical

belief that the philosophy of science is, then, the only legitimate philosophy upon which modern people should build their lives.

Meanwhile, we may hold conceptualizations about ultimate reality radically different from those required in reductionistic science. Such differences in worldview, even when we think we are being scientific, lead, in my opinion, to radical differences in what we consider legitimate evidence.

Here is one instance where an older woman, the supervisor of a retirement complex, believes she has the power to be a channeler. She takes a continuing education course on the subject and informally tries her skills on some of the tenants where she works. She finds that she is able to make accurate readings on many of them, corroborated by their verbal reports to her of foretold events that later came true. This woman is now absolutely convinced that these powers are real, precisely because they are real for her and she has tested them. Her evidence, however, is all experiential. No amount of laboratory data and no scientific theory to the contrary will convince her otherwise.

Here in another case is a distinguished team of researchers at a prestigious Ivy League University who have set up a laboratory to study the effects of conscious choice on the measurement of objective recording devices. After several years of exacting trials, they believe they have statistically significant data to show the effect of consciousness on matter, independent of mediating influences through the sense organs. The problem is that none of their more skeptical colleagues will believe the data. No one will replicate their work, much less discuss it in a scientific forum in a manner that would have any impact on the way most sciences are conducted. In this case, their colleagues throughout the university and the professions have implicitly proclaimed by their silence that if new facts do not fit prevailing theories about reality, then so much the worse for the facts.

As one distinguished molecular biologist put it, if what the psychical researchers said were true then it would already have been taken up by other laboratories and tested and we would have heard of the final results by now. We have heard nothing. Ergo, there must have been nothing there in the first place. Sentiment again, I maintain, plays a major role in such responses.

What then is this penchant in parapsychology for exact measurement and replication of minute effects in the laboratory? What is this drive toward the objective collection of anecdotal facts in a clinical setting? And what can this mode of investigation have to tell us about psychic phenomena and the experience of death? The very history of the field suggests that psychical research has survived because it has already made major contributions, not to physics, but to experimental psychopathology, to psychotherapeutics, and to the evolution of the so-called soft sciences of personality, abnormal, social, and clinical psychology (Taylor, 1985, 1986).

Yet these advances were not solidified and built upon, but rather marginalized within the field under the rubric of parapsychological depth psychology. Instead, psychical research, in being renamed parapsychology, has come to mean laboratory based experiments performed according to the methodology of the natural sciences or else the collection of verbal reports in a clinical setting which are then analyzed and cast into the context of some theoretical model.

By giving preeminence to this approach, parapsychology has thus made many of the same epistemological mistakes that the rest of the sciences continue to make about the nature and province of inward experience. We now must ask ourselves, even if we can show data for the existence of psychic powers in some laboratory or some clinic, what does it mean? Cast into the wrong context, I maintain, the inward meaning of such events can never be revealed.

Their proper context, I shall maintain, is not the replication of psychic phenomena in the laboratory, or the finding of lost children, wallets, or dead bodies, or even communication with departed loved ones. The proper context lies within the domain of self-knowledge, the refinement of character, the evolution and transformation of consciousness, the actualization of our higher nature (Taylor, 1993). In Zen they refer to both the experience of polishing this inward mirror as well as the transcendence of all such formulations. Its language is not the measurements of the mathematicians, the syllogisms of the logicians, or the abstractions of the philosophers. Its discourse is rather carried on in the songs of the heart, the intuitions of poetry, the light of insight. It is neither numerical nor logical, but it transcends both—it's true power is symbolic, metaphoric, mythic, and visionary.

The inward method, moreover, is any means by which we can effect an internal opening of the doors of perception. Psychologically, this may be expressed in the various kinds of techniques we master to induce an altered state at will—the practice of breath control, the performance of meditation, the contemplation of inspired poetry, an act of hallowed movement. We may actively try to find ways to free the mind from its lower fetters. So the Zen koan asks, where does the white go when the snow melts? What did your face look like before your mother's womb? When you die and they scatter your ashes to the wind, where are you?

Here we come upon the fruitful idea that exploration of the subconscious simulates the death experience, that there is some intrinsic relationship between our ability to transcend the bounds of everyday waking consciousness and the experience that happens to us at the end of physical life.

This process, in simulating the departure of the spirit from its material form while remaining alive in the same body, I shall refer to as a symbolic death of the ego. Here, the filtering mechanism that separates us from the world is disbanded. Individual identity merges into the collective; we are inundated by contents from the collective reservoir; self and not-self become one for a moment until we recollect ourselves at a new level. We are called upon at certain prescient moments to leave behind a former self and take on a new and wider identity. We die in order to come to life. All this lies within our grasp in the immediate moment, either because we have found meaning through suffering or we have discovered a higher life through the less painful but more difficult process of actualizing our values.

Because we are constrained by our ability to conceptualize the whole of reality, all of psychology, as William James suggested, may be nothing more than a colossal elaboration of the ego. The very act of conceptualization dooms our expression to the inherent limits of language and discursive thought. The school that has dominated linguistics too long is the one which believes that if a word does not exist for something then that something must not exist. Normative language and thought are, of course, always going through their own evolution. They will always lag behind experience, just as our social institutions, founded on insight, by their very nature work to prevent

the kind of innovation that created them in the first place. The process of personal transformation proceeds apace, nevertheless, meaning that our present day cultural institutions, now more than ever, no longer accurately express the breadth and depth of the experiences brought to those institutions by its members.

Experience always transcends thought. Our forgetfulness of this in a modern technologically driven society dooms us to the insanity of believing that if we only had a model of death we will know what it is. A comedian recently pointed this out to his audience when he made a few jokes about the concept of a living will and the desire to avoid heroic measures at the end. But suppose, he said, that the vegetative state is the most desirable from the standpoint of achieving both our narcissistic wish to cling to life and our urge to experience eternity. Suppose that in this condition we actually get all that we have been looking for. All of our material needs are taken care of through life support systems; we do not have to struggle to survive; we do not have to answer what our detractors have to say about us or listen to the triviality of the masses. We even find out who loves us the most because they are the ones who keep us constant company at the bedside. Meanwhile, we supposedly remain conscious at a very deep level to all that goes on. It is just not apparent to anyone else. Yet there we are, perched on the edge of the abyss. All of inward creation lies before us. The firmament is constantly within view. We bask in the higher light. Why on earth, and in heaven's name, would we want to pull the plug? But who, of course, could foretell this in advance?

Death and the Transcendent

Our sensibilities are repelled, however, at the implicit narcissism of presuming that we could still cling to this earthly body and also be able to enter into the next life. There are numerous injunctions against this throughout the history of ascetic spiritual practice, where it is generally believed that one has to starve the appetites of the flesh, abstain from all foods that are the product of sexual reproduction, cease violence against all living organisms, and in general turn the senses away from their slavish attachments to all external objects in order to witness a

vision of higher consciousness. So the Theravada Buddhists say that when arriving at the farther shore, one must perforce leave the boat at the river bank.

One cannot fail to be struck by the implicit relationship expressed here between the experience of death and our conceptions of ultimate reality. People who have near-death experiences come back and report the beatific vision of something much higher and more perfect than they had ever known, and once having seen this, if permitted to re-enter what they now call the physical plane, for ever afterward their lives are changed. What had been before a complete unknown, or perhaps only an intimation or an occasional glimpse, now becomes the permanent and unceasing ground of all material existence.

Here is the celebrated case of the respected physician Dr. George Ritchie (1978), a man who died and came back to life, having seen the realms of the heavens and the hells, events that were to later happen to him, even the Great White Light of the Void, but whose single most important characteristic was a transformed consciousness. People afterwards described his immense peace, his even-mindedness, his beatitude. He himself said the most significant change that came over him was his neverceasing awareness of the divinity in each person, which he saw to one extent or another as he gazed into the soul of every individual he met afterwards. Experientially he had discovered that only love overcomes death, transcends death, is the very bridge between life and death. As a young doctoral student, Raymond Moody heard Ritchie speak in 1965, and, believing this to be the first fully documented case of near-death experience, Moody was led into his further now widely known investigations.

Aldous Huxley, unbeknownst to anyone, read the Tibetan *Bardo Thodol* to his dying wife, Maria. Alone with her, he reassured her over and over that she should turn toward the light, the single most important experience at the moment of transition, the duration of which would determine the next karmic domain of one's rebirth. That he had read the book to her and that she had been guided by this light was later spontaneously reported to Huxley by Eileen Garrett, from what was described as an after-death communication with Maria (Bedford, 1973; Garrett, 1968).

All of Christian Science is in fact based on this revelation of the Light. In 1866, after she had been healed of a nervous condition by Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, Mary Baker Patterson, then recently divorced, had a serious fall on the ice and dislocated her spine. Semi-conscious and initially in great pain, she was taken to a nearby house, but against her doctor's orders, she soon had herself removed to her own home. She refused to take her prescribed medicine, having no faith in it, she said, choosing instead to have only friends and church members around her.

At one point, alone with only her Bible, she turned to one of the healing episodes of Jesus, and she later wrote, His words began to flood into her thoughts. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man can come unto the Father but through me." She was suddenly filled with the conviction that her life was in God and at that moment she was healed. The core of her realization was that faith in matter was error. "Mind is All, matter nothing," became her watchword. Having recourse, she said, only to her own inner resources, and sustained only by her Bible, she resolved to place herself solely in God's hands, and by this means achieved the regeneration she sought. Christian Science thus dates its beginnings from this experience (Taylor, in press).

Likewise, recovery from alcoholism, it has been found, is often accompanied by an experience of the transcendent. Bill Wilson, the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, in 1933 had checked into the Townsend Hospital in New York City for the third time, facing, he believed, either insanity or eminent death from his prolonged drinking. Instead, he had a white light experience, upon which he later built the Twelve Step Program:

My depression deepened unbearably and finally it seemed to me as though I were at the very bottom of the pit. I still gagged badly at the notion of a Power greater than myself, but finally, just for the moment, the last vestige of my proud honesty was crushed. All at once I found myself crying out, "If there is a God, let Him show Himself! I am ready to do anything, anything!"

Suddenly, my room blazed with an indescribably white light. I was seized with an ecstasy beyond description. Every joy I had known was pale

by comparison. The light, the ecstasy—I was conscious of nothing else for a time.

Then, seen in the mind's eye, there was a mountain. I stood upon its summit, where a great wind blew. A wind, not of air, but of spirit. In great, clean strength, it blew right through me. Then came the blazing thought "You are a free man." I know not at all how long I remained in this state, but finally the light and the ecstasy subsided. I again saw the wall of my room. As I became more quiet, a great peace stole over me, and this was accompanied by a sensation difficult to describe. I became acutely conscious of a presence which seemed like a veritable sea of living spirit. I lay on the shores of a new world. "This," I thought, "must be the great reality. The God of the preachers."

Savoring my new world, I remained in this state for a long time. I seemed to be possessed by the absolute, and the curious conviction deepened that no matter how wrong things seemed to be, there could be no question of the ultimate rightness of God's universe. For the first time, I felt that I really belonged. I knew that I was loved and could love in return. I thanked my God, who had given me a glimpse of His absolute self. Even though a pilgrim upon an uncertain highway, I need be concerned no more, for I had glimpsed the great beyond. (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1984, p. 121)

Wilson's recovery is well documented. But little known is the fact that he soon became a practicing Spiritualist, held numerous seances to convince atheistic drunks that there was something beyond themselves to believe in, and he allegedly received communications from William James and St. Francis from beyond the grave. This is the inward reason he always recommended to AA readers *The Little Flowers of St. Francis* and James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and always spoke of James as a founder of AA, although the Harvard psychologist had been long dead before Wilson's organization was actually launched (T. Powers, personal communication, January 1994).

If all of this theistic Christian language is not to your liking, we can just as easily turn to the non-theistic yoga texts of India. I have chosen to comment on Sutra 22 of Book III, *Vibhuti*, the acquisition of supernormal powers. The text says:

sopakramam nirupakramam cha karma
 tatsamyamādaparāntjñānamariṣṭebhyo vā
 (Aranya, 1983, pp. 293-294)

A rough translation of this passage is that karma is either fast or slow in fructifying. By practicing *samyama* on either karma or portents, foreknowledge of death can be acquired.

The general meaning of this sutra is that the effects of all thoughts, words, and deeds come to fruition either right away or over time. If they come to fruition over time they have been stored as unconscious seeds (*bija*), which will sprout forth when conditions are right. If the conditions are ripe in the immediate moment, they will have their effect right now. In advanced yoga *samyama* means the three fold tool of attention, concentrated meditation, and absorption into any object of perception. The purpose of yoga is the promotion of insight, not into the objects themselves, but into their illuminating quality, which leads to the experience of pure consciousness independent of inert matter. One by-product of achieving this experience is the ability to see into past and future lives, or into successive individual moments of consciousness. In this process, past karma is either burned up or to be lived out. Burning is immediate liberation, while residual karma defines the state of the next rebirth. *Samyama* on the effects of karma thus allows one to witness the speed of karmic fruition and thus, knowledge of the present end of this life can be gathered.

I should also note that the mention of portents simply means that one can foretell one's death by looking within: there is no sound on closing the ears or visual illumination when pressing the closed eye; one may see messengers of death or wraiths of departed relatives; or one may suddenly see the heavens or spirits, or perceive everything contrary to what has been seen before. These explanations come directly from the standard textual commentaries. All of these examples, taken from the Eastern and Western literature suggest an intimate connection between psychic phenomena and the death, or near-death, experience.

Conclusion

So you see that, rather than more science or more clinical data, I am an advocate of the poetic imperative. Instead of always allowing external circumstances to define our inward reality for us, I feel that we need to rekindle living myths and energetic symbols as the basic tools that assist us in defining what is most central to our true nature. We need to realize that, despite the fact that words are a major source of pain and misunderstanding, language can be a vehicle for its own transcendence. We must emphatically assert that the iconography of the transcendent cannot be excluded simply on epistemological grounds from any science that purports to explain the whole of reality.

This charges us, however, with the necessity of framing a psychology of inner experience subtle enough and significant enough to speak to the hidden assumptions of current rationalist thought; to pose a significant enough alternative to the long standing and reigning drift toward nihilistic materialism; and to create a new way of thinking about reality fit to address the complex demands of the future.

What is at stake is tremendous. For one, there is the cultural definition of personality, and hence how our educational experience will be shaped. Are we going to continue to train only the rational and sensory faculties, to the detriment of the emotions and intuition? Are we to continue to produce generation after generation of people whose main purpose is to spew out more data? Are we to ignore the attendant growth and refinement of the moral and aesthetic qualities that must go into guiding science and the larger enterprise of human thought toward higher ends?

Another issue is the role of the mind in healing—will it be eliminated and forgotten? Or, more hopefully, will it be incorporated into an integrated picture of higher human functioning? Will mechanistic biology continue to find innovative ways to appropriate from the domain of the spirit in a way that reduces effects to mere technique? Or will the legal and exclusive power to heal pass out of the hands of specialists and back to the patient, but now in some new collaborative effort that neither could have foreseen in the past?

There have in fact been generations of visionaries who have spoken to the same old themes that confront us anew, but now more

urgently—the death of personal freedom, the enslavement of the individual, the destruction of the planet, as well as the more existential questions of who we are and the meanings we attach to life and death. We are called upon as the voice of a new generation to forge the base metals of science and the spirit into some as yet unidentified alloy that adequately speaks to the modern problems of consciousness. It seems important to remember that this process goes on nowhere else but in the crucible of our own immediate experience, in an expansion of our present state of consciousness; it is here that these questions must be confronted. And even if we cannot fashion a final objective answer about them, suppose, by considering them in this admittedly tenuous and uncertain light, that personality transformation is still the result?

I see, however, that I have at last run out of time, so I will leave you with that proverbial epitaph carved onto the tombstone of a recently deceased Spiritualist, which read: "To be continued..."

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DISCUSSION

BRAUDE: Eugene, I appreciate your emphasis on experience and its proper role in any kind of reasoned and full-blown view of reality. But I want to make sure that you're not saying something which is obviously false. You say that we tend to forget that experience is primary. You say that experience always transcends thought. And you draw a distinction between say the scientific way of understanding the world and the direct experience that we have of various kinds of events. What concerns me about that is the suggestion (and maybe you didn't mean to be making this suggestion) that when we leave the scientific mode of cognition and resort to the more direct experience of whatever it is we're experiencing, that somehow that mode of understanding nature is more direct and more likely to be accurate than the other. I mean, it may be true that there is a respect in which experience transcends thought. But it is never exactly independent of it. And especially once we're adults, all of our experience, it seems to me, is shot through with cognitive elaboration that we couldn't divest ourselves of even if we wanted to. That's one reason why Humean empiricism is doomed to fail.

TAYLOR: I noticed that you made experience the mere object of a preposition.

BRAUDE: What did I say? You expect me to remember? Egad!

TAYLOR: I noticed your emphasis on "experience". This is precisely my point. Yes, I make the claim that direct experience is superior to scientific knowledge within its proper and appropriate domain. What I basically wish to challenge is the notion that objective science and phenomenological experience always operate in the same domain. Suppose that there could possibly be many domains of experience only one of which was available to the methods of science.

BRAUDE: I don't challenge that.

TAYLOR: Then why make the claim, as you just did, that direct experience is likely to be more accurate? Now, did I say that?

BRAUDE: That's what I'm asking you. It seems to me that in fact, calling it "direct" is somewhat misleading.

TAYLOR: I tried to make a preliminary statement about this problem at the recent Louisa Rhine Centenary Conference held by the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man.⁵ What I tried to say there was, I don't think that we know enough right now to construct a legitimate science of the spirit. I think that we are in a better position to empower the individual separating the domains of technology and immediate experience. I don't think to be more accurate means simply appropriating experience as another category into the scientific domain. What I'm talking about is not just another little item in our pantheon of understandings as far as discriminations of cognitive reality is concerned. I'm talking about a radical transformation of context, of worldview, and that those kinds of transformations happen right here. They happen right here to us. It is at periodic intervals when the most important experiences happen to us that the inward doors are flung open. Those are the experiences that change us, not the scientific information. The only thing I'm trying to posit at this particular point is that I can have an experience and you can sit there and watch me and give me an objective description of it. My claim is that it is different to simply just say, "Oh, you're talking about direct experience." That is a piece of objective information about what you heard me say, and that was not what I was talking about. What I'm talking about is the inner phenomenological domain where I live that has states of consciousness associated with it. I have an elaborate metaphorical and visionary language of inner experience to understand those domains. Maybe I haven't looked within, and basically I stay trapped in that domain between the demands of external material reality and my lack of self-knowledge or my lack of an inward language. But I claim that you cannot take the totality of inward experience, simply put it out there and say, "Well, we can observe it, collect facts about it, measure

⁵ Rao, K.R. (Ed.). (1993). *Cultivating consciousness: Enhancing human potential, wellness, and healing*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

it, make a theory about it, know what it is, learn how to control it, overcome death, and live to be immortal." To me by the time you have gotten there, you have missed the point completely. Personality transformation does not happen by that route. That's really the main point that I am trying to emphasize.

BRAUDE: I understand. I don't believe I'm challenging that. Let me try one more time to make clear what it is I'm saying. Notice one of the ways you describe that. I'm not challenging the transformative powers of certain kinds of episodes in a person's life. I don't mean to minimize those at all. What it has to do with is, for example, you described it as "opening the doors". I think the implication of that is that somehow what you are getting at is reality in a way in which you might not otherwise.

EDGE: Some sort of "Immaculate Perception."

BRAUDE: Maybe something like that. You say when criticizing the scientific way of apprehending reality, mind always has to intervene. All I'm suggesting is that mind is intervening even when it may feel as if it isn't.

TAYLOR: I think that when we take consciousness, extend it out to the material world, and make these discriminations about it, there is a modeling that goes on where we're somehow able to make interactions within the realm of probability which seem to allow us to gain some control over it. As long as we do that and focus on external material reality out there, our attention remains out there and the structures in the mind become fixed when really there is no such thing as structures of the mind. But there is as long as we continue to make these discriminations and lay down the habits, passions, dreams, hopes, and desires that are translated out there into this interaction. However, as soon as you take consciousness and turn it within, the entire fixed structure starts to move around. That is the basic principle of psychotherapy. That is the basic explanation of insanity. That is the basic principle of spiritual discipline. What I'm saying is, we live so much out there at the juncture between external material reality and consciousness connecting with it that we have constructed this great big psychology of everything from that particular standpoint. Not everybody stands there, although that seems to be where Western educated intellectuals, who believe in the Judeo-Christian, Greco-

Roman, Western European, and Anglo-American definition of reality, think that everyone else should be. The majority of the world is simply not in that position and that view does not even square with all of reality. It is not a scientific statement that I aspire to make because what we really may be confronted with is that science may not be appropriate for understanding this domain. If it is, then it will become a transformed science. If it is not, then science will simply become just one other form of useful knowledge within culture. Alternative knowledge-getting epistemologies will then emerge. My claim is that we have not even begun to look at viable epistemologies beyond the rational projections of the mind.

BRAUDE: I'm not challenging that.

OWENS: I very much agree with you that our culture needs to be balanced with regard to respecting experience. I have been very impressed with the life transformations following near-death experience in my studies and I have known about those even before I went into it. What I was not prepared for was the agony that these people have gone through in our culture. These extremely powerful, meaningful experiences are not respected the way that they should be. It's very difficult to communicate the distress that these people have been through. I think that the more we can do to change the culture, the better. However, I would really caution against throwing out the baby with the bathwater. As a scientist I use scientific tools in my study of near-death experience. I feel as though I go back and forth between working at the computer and doing my science and using all the methodologies that I have learned and truly appreciating the experience, just feeling a true reverence for it. I think we need both.

TAYLOR: Thank you. But I would challenge that. I would challenge that we would need both. Just because they exist does not automatically mean they are equal or even *should* be integrated. They both may be wrong. That was the point that I made earlier. Suppose, for instance, that the real problem that has developed is an overemphasis on the rational and the material. These have now become the central focus of our reality. It doesn't matter about experience and it doesn't matter about people. Any old subject in a scientific experiment will do. They can be rats. They could be black, white, red, or yellow individuals. It doesn't matter. They just need to be subjects

who can give us data. Well, I am saying no. Any legitimate thoughtful approach to the problems that we have to face personally in our own lives means for me that science is just a tool for me to help get a handle on this greater mystery. Science is not the mystery itself. I revel in the realization that there is no religion and there is no science which has ultimately concluded why you are sitting over there and I am standing over here right now and who we really are. To keep that foremost is, to me, an extraordinarily difficult thing for you and I to contemplate in a modern context.

OWENS: I am often faced with the problem of people thinking that because I'm trying to explain a near-death experience scientifically, I'm trying to explain it away or I don't have respect for the experience. It is a trigger reaction that I think happens in all of us. For example, when I suggested an explanation about the old hag experience with Michael Grosso, his response was to take that off of the list. No, that's not what I intended at all.

TAYLOR: That is my point. In other words, why simply take it out of its context so it looks like any other category in science when to me its true value has to do with a process of personality transformation that we do not even understand yet? Personality transformation—that is the direction to develop. Until then, misunderstandings are to be expected. The fact is, it may not be the positivistic context in which your work belongs because we have no consensually validated language of inner experience. We have no inner framework within our culture to understand the living reality of our ancestors who may be all physically dead beings but still here with us right now in some spiritually living presence. The majority of people in the world believe that the dead are with us now. Yet we say in the name of science that this cannot be true. We take people who live in other cultures and train them in science. Many become neurotic individuals who have to compartmentalize and live in two different worlds at once. When they go into the university setting or the scientific laboratory, they believe that nothing spiritual exists in the material universe and they have to live their lives according to this philosophy of despair. When they go back home they again take on the mystery of where they came from. They have been told by Western culture that their traditional way is a dying worldview, when in fact this to them is the view that lives. So,

I think we have something to learn from non-technological cultures that present us with an iconography of the *non-rational*.

OWENS: I just want to say once more, the key here is transforming science, not putting it down. I think that it is much more productive to think about the way science can change rather than just pointing the finger at it like the bad guy.

TAYLOR: I agree with you that transforming science is a possibility. However, to me scientific information is not necessarily the only possible option.

LAWRENCE: I agree with your basic premise because I, like Justine, study the experiences of people. I think it is very interesting because people who have near-death experiences are convinced that what happened to them was real and that they did share in an afterlife. I mean, you could have all the scientists in the world say, "It was a hallucination; it was a dream" but they are not going to believe it. Their own personal experience is what their reality is. However, I think they still have a question of how that fits into the culture that they live in. People then invalidate their experiences. What is the meaning for them that they were "chosen", or were they "chosen"? They have other questions about their lives and their immediate situation that the scientific community does not address. We as scientific people are trying to address, "Does this prove that there is life after life?" And, "Is this something that really goes on?" But those are not their questions. Their questions are, "Is this normal?" "How come everybody else doesn't have this?"

TAYLOR: I completely agree with you. Your point poses several interesting possibilities. First, I apologize if I appear somewhat militant, especially because this is a sympathetic audience. But in a certain sense, I feel that constant data collection and model building are perpetuating the same mistakes that got us into this problem in the first place. If the transformation is going to happen, then, perhaps here is one of the places to start.

Second, when people have these near-death experiences a series of remarkable transformations always seem to begin afterwards. They make new friends. The books in their library change. They start doing different things with their time. They do not spend much time in front of the television anymore. They begin reading, searching, and looking

more deeply into things. They have effectively experienced two births; there is the biological place where they were born and the place where they became awakened to whom they really are. After the second kind of birth there's always a search for spiritual compatriots and the place where the soul can finally rest and call home. The journey takes place inside yourself and you have to go alone. But then, miraculously, people you never met before start coming out of the woodwork who are much like yourself. They can be old; they can be young. They could be men; they could be women. They can cut across all the categories that we use to judge people. I think we wish that there was more of that inward spiritual quest which leads to high moral and aesthetic ends. At present the diabolical and pathological dimensions seem to dominate the mainstream in which we live. We know that higher consciousness is possible, however. The knowledge is there. The esoteric books of the East have been hidden for thousands of years. Now it's all translatable. It's all right out there. It is no longer the big mystery that it was. What the priests denied to us for so many centuries is now available to anyone educated enough to read and has an interest in the subject. I happen to think that our dominant cultural institutions haven't got a clue to what this transformation is all about. Meanwhile, there is a spontaneous social revolution taking place involving just these very topics. The United States is in the relatively unique position because of its place in the history of the Western visionary tradition. Fueled by the counter-culture movement in the 1960s, present-day folk psychology is having a remarkable impact on the way clinicians deliver care to patients. There is a non-unionized revolution among educated employees who have decided that they are going to take less money and not go up the corporate ladder as fast in exchange for time off so that their lives will be more well-rounded. Management has had to respond or stand to lose some of their best people. Science is being challenged by this popular revolution as well. Parapsychology and the study of near-death phenomena are part of this revolution. But you cannot make the claim that this is cutting-edge science, because it is not. It could influence science, but it is not the scientific mainstream. I think there is a misunderstanding of where these cultural forces are coming from and that misunderstanding is probably preventing parapsychology from being more of what it could really be.

ROLL: First let me say that I enjoyed your paper a great deal.

TAYLOR: Thank you. I enjoyed yours.

ROLL: Thank you. I thought you might say so. I found the experience you had at the death of your grandfather very, very interesting and significant. It opens up a whole realm of near-death experiences that has not been explored but that is out there—the near-death experience of the one who is close to the one who departs. I remember Lawrence LeShan told me about an experience of his wife. She was in California when her father died in New York. At that moment she had a transcending near-death type of experience, without any awareness of her father's death. I often wish that we would ask questions not only of the ones who are dying but also of the ones who are standing by. I remember one or two other persons who got into a euphoric state at the time of somebody's death, somebody very close. It can be embarrassing. People say, "Well, she's in shock or he's in shock." But, you explain it away that way. It seems to be a genuine transcending experience that results when you follow the one that you are connected to.

TAYLOR: If that is the case, then it would probably radically transform simple things like our psychology of everyday perception. Let's go back to the original issue we started with at the beginning of the day, the problem of representation. Suppose that it is not an external world out there independent of the senses but a kind of a colorizing phenomena that goes on, an interaction between human consciousness and material reality which creates these things simultaneously as they happen? The Buddhists call this "dependent co-arising". Now, it seems to me, what you are describing would overthrow some of the basic models and assumptions upon which the current models of experimentation in normative science are based. Isn't that one of the reasons why we are here, to take a look at what direction parapsychology could go to achieve exactly those kind of events?

ROLL: Yes. This is where the participatory approach connects with the objective scientific approach. It reminds me of the claims of physicists that the observer affects the system that he or she observes. There is an interaction there. You can't quite distinguish one from the other.

TAYLOR: Yes. As a matter of fact, I take the issue quite personally. I feel that at some time in the near future that psychology and psychiatry might potentially lead some transformation of the social, medical, and perhaps even the natural, sciences precisely because they are both sciences and arts. Since they are not like the hard-core naturalistic sciences, they are denigrated within that hierarchy. Precisely because they are imbued with the reality of the unconscious, they exude this problem of the personal equation much more than any of the other sciences. It seems to me that they could potentially be the philosopher's stone precisely because they are a bridge between the sciences and the humanities. The late Rollo May, Tom Greening, Stanley Krippner, along with myself and others have been playing around with the idea of reviving William James's metaphysics of radical empiricism as more or less the way James originally meant it—as a critique of experimentalism in scientific psychology. The idea would be to bring about a transformation of humanistic psychology and make it more like the type of influence in scientific psychology, that would bring about the very transformation that we are seeking. Suddenly psychology might become, instead of a methodological science interested in behavior and cognition, a truly person-centered science. Here science would become basically a tool, not an end. So, if the revolution is going to happen within psychology, then why not also within psychical research? But up until now parapsychology has ranged instead across the entire domain of the sciences. I think a much more concerted strategy should be taken up, focused on transforming psychology.

AFTERNOON GENERAL DISCUSSION
DAY ONE

ALMEDER: I just want to remind everybody there are various different conceptions about what science is and that depending on what you take it to be it may be able to provide you with evidence that confirms belief in reincarnation and things of that sort. Nobody ever expected science to provide one with these transformational experiences. I mean, obviously, there is private knowledge that one has as a result of certain experiences that can't be repeated. And one comes to acquire knowledge of that sort. That doesn't mean, though, that you have to throw out science or even that you have to demean it. I tend to be convinced of the fact that science can do a great deal by way of establishing things like facts that are relevant to supporting beliefs. In other words, I may not have any transformational experiences in my life. It would not follow from that that I could not be rationally justified in believing that some people survive their death. I often hear people talk about what science can and can't do. I'm just here to tell you that when you sit down among philosophers of science and start the discussion on what science is you get a very interesting and fairly protracted discussion on what a scientific explanation is supposed to do, not one of which is to give you transformational experiences. Science may fail us in that regard, but nobody ever asked it to do that. As for contemporary psychology, I think it's a mess. I'm not sure what you have in mind. I'm a little unclear on what your thesis is, Eugene. Maybe it's the hour. Maybe it's just a little jet lag here. Is your thesis that somehow or another we need a new psychology based on personal experience? I still think we have to be very careful about what science cannot do and to set ourselves over against it might be a serious mistake. I happen to think we have some very good empirical evidence for personal survival. And I have not had any of those experiences.

TAYLOR: I will concede I would rather see it as a tool than an end even if I have to be a little bit militant in order to achieve that. I am reminded of a recent biography on Simon Newcomb by Professor

Albert Moyer.⁶ Newcomb was an astronomer and the first Director of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. He was, of course, linked to all the big science committees for the federal government in the late 19th-century. Moyer shows that there were three levels of discourse that Newcomb and his scientific colleagues engaged in. One was the public image of science. All the definitions were, in which case, clear-cut. Science was not the same as religion. Science was numerical. It had nothing to do with any subjective events. Then there were the discussions that the scientists had with their deans and with the people in the government whom they talked to in order to get funding for science. They conveyed a completely different kind of image of what science could do. This was science as a vehicle of progress, as a tool, as a weapon, as whatever they needed to say in order to establish that they were at the center of the scientific military industrial complex. Newcomb and his colleagues were the basic arbiters of science. The money came to them. They dispensed it. They produced science. Then there were the conversations the scientists had among themselves, which is exactly the conversation you just described. They all clearly admitted to *themselves* the tentative nature of their enterprise, despite what they said in public. The fact that these three different levels of discourse still go on simultaneously is an extremely important point for us to remember and a very powerful piece of information for the type of science that parapsychology purports to want to support.

PALMER: A lot of what I was going to say has been said by other people, particularly by Steve Braude. I wholeheartedly agree with what he said. I'll say it again but put a slightly different spin on it. I think it's important when we are discussing this topic to keep our objectives and methods separate. If the goal is to "get in touch with reality", I think Steve hit the nail very much on the head. When you try to contact reality, you can either do it through cognitive scientific models, with language and equations, or you can do it through personal experience.

⁶ Moyer, A.E. (1992). *A scientist's voice in American culture: Simon Newcomb and the rhetoric of scientific method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Of course, science really boils down to experience; you experience, for example, what is on the dial of your machine. Both kinds of experience may or may not correspond to objective reality assuming there is such a thing. Nonetheless, there are certain rules that I would think both phenomenologists and experimentalists would accept. For example, a near-death experience is not close to reality simply because it is accompanied by a sense of conviction. I can have tremendous conviction when I'm drunk, but in another state I all of a sudden realize that this conviction does not square with the reality that I see at this time. This means I have to accept some kind of a relativism. I also believe that the near-death experience is not literal reality, but I may be wrong. I'm saying we can't know that.

But what if the goal is not to get in touch with the reality, but to achieve personal transformation? Now, what do we mean by transformation? If by transformation we mean getting in touch with reality, the argument reduces to what I just said. But maybe that's not what we mean by transformation. Even if we were all to become convinced that the near-death experience is not real in the sense of reflecting what the afterlife is like, there may be a sense in which it is very transformative for the person to believe that. If you describe transformation in terms of a sense of well-being, of being better able to function in the world, the near-death experience may be very valuable. Transpersonal psychology notwithstanding, being in touch with reality does not necessarily lead to transformation. I'm inclined to think it often does not. So, maybe from the point of view of transformation, it might be better to do entirely different things than you would if the primary goal was to be in touch with reality.

I would like to end this tirade with a plea for humility, and I want to go back to getting in touch with reality as my framework. Why is it that we want to have this sense of reality? Why is it that we as scientists want the ultimate cognitive theory? Why do we want to unify science? In answering those questions, I come back to what I think all ethical philosophy reduces to, and that is hedonism. Basically we do what we do because it gives us some kind of satisfaction. I have read that it's like a mystical experience for some physicists to contemplate the simple elegance and power of the formula $e=mc^2$. So, I would say even science can be transformative in this sense. Even though hedonism

is a pejorative word, I think that is basically what we are dealing with. We want to have psychic or transcendental experiences to study them, to know more about them, because that is satisfying and fulfilling to us in some way. But different things are going to be fulfilling for different people. You have all heard Carl Sagan wax enthusiastically about the "billions of billions" of stars in our galaxy. Here is a scientist who is really turned on by astronomy. On the other hand, there is a quote by the philosopher Paul Feyerabend, who, in an attack on scientific hubris, commented, "What's the big deal? I can't relate to somebody who gets turned on by a bunch of rocks out in space." Again, Feyerabend's point was that different people are turned on by different things.

Returning to my humility theme, let's not denigrate what someone else is doing simply because when we put ourselves in that position, it wouldn't satisfy us. I see this particularly in parapsychology. When I read Eugene Taylor's paper it reminded me of some things that Rhea White has been saying that I have been very critical of. I don't think you go quite as far as she does, Eugene, but it is still this "us versus them" mentality. Perhaps there's a kind of reaction formation going on; there is a hubris on one side and this lead to hubris on the other side. What I tried to argue with Rhea is that there is value in all our approaches. Let's not be so judgmental. Let's recognize that whereas one approach accomplishes something good for Person X, something different might accomplish it for Person Y.

TAYLOR: There is a visionary tradition that you have either seen or you have not. If you have seen it, you know exactly what I'm talking about, and if you have not, you haven't the slightest clue what I'm about to say. Dr. Elisha Atkins, a physician and professor at Yale, made this point to me one day. He was a very sympathetic and compassionate physician, who learned all the sciences that he needed to but he had a low opinion of the purely rational types. He came in just fuming one day. He's been retired for a number of years. I said, "Well, what's the matter with you?" He said, "You know, I have been thinking about it, and I'm just furious. All my life I have seen myself as a compassionate and warm person. I have stood out against all these people who espouse empirical science and exact measurement. I always believed that I was inferior to them because they claimed I was too soft. I compensated by mastering their way of thinking. You know, it

didn't dawn on me until after I retired that those people do not know anything else but that, and I know both things. I'm just mad because it took me so long to realize that simple truth." Professor Atkins' story suggests that it might be about time we brought the hard and the soft together and started to assert what the real relationship might need to be, frankly. In my opinion, it has to do with the primacy of experience. Scientific knowledge is the mere handmaiden to an enlightened personal consciousness.

PALMER: Let me just make one very brief point. I'm not quite sure this is what you were getting at, but I think it is fine that if you think you are selling a better mousetrap than the next guy you try to convince him of that. That's not what I was complaining about.

LAWRENCE: I would just like to discuss something that you said, John. I don't know if I heard this correctly or not. I think I have heard Eugene talk about how we invalidate certain kinds of experiences and phenomena. I think you can't talk about science without talking about paradigms and Kuhn, as Michael Grosso pointed out. A lot of work has been done demonstrating that people interpret reality based on the current paradigm. We don't know whether that is a situation that we are really faced with. When you talk about people who have near-death experiences, you have eight million people who are saying, "This is what happened to me," and we say, "No, that's not really what happened to you. This is what happened to you." Fifty years from now it will be really clear who was right and who was not. When you're sitting in the middle of it, it is really tough to decide. Should we pursue this avenue? Is this really a paradigm shift? Is this something that's telling us something that should be investigated? Or is this something that really does just stay within the normal way that we usually interpret it? Or do we need new ways of investigating and new ways of looking at it?

TAYLOR: I would challenge the emphasis that you have placed on reality versus my fantasy about reality. In other words, I think what science is presently confronting is the epistemological conception of multiple realities. Acknowledging the existence of multiple realities is going to completely transform science. It is going to mean an end to the reigning view that the material world is really the only reality there is, and all the rest of what is going on in my mind is idealism or myth

or something like that. I think that in the neuroscience revolution we most cogently see the new biology of consciousness is forcing us to look for the first time at the very organ that is creating science in the first place. Philosophies of mind are now coming back with a vengeance. It's precisely these issues that have been winnowed out of the sciences over the past 100 years. Now it has become the major issue to look at the possibility of these multiple realities.

PALMER: I just want to make one brief response to something that Madelaine said. In near-death experiences and out-of-body experiences it's very important to make a distinction between an experience and inferences that people make from an experience. When a person tells you, "I had an experience of what the afterlife is really like," that person is not describing their experience; they are making an inference from the experience. You can get in a lot of trouble by not making a distinction between the experience on the one hand, which should be in and of itself validated and appreciated, and the inference from the experience, which I think (at least as long as we are in some sense committed to Western logic) is just plain wrong.

LAWRENCE: I don't disagree with your statement. Who could disagree with your statement? But I think the question is, whether you have a near-death experience or an out-of-body experience, how you handle the veridical perceptions? People see things that, given their particular state, they should not have been able to see. If you work in a hospital or some place where you are taking care of dying people, they will report things. There is no way that you can explain how they have heard or seen what they report. I think those are the kinds of things that don't fit our paradigm. That's different than the interpretation people make of the experience.

PALMER: You have opened up a new area which certainly bears on inference. I'm not saying the inference is necessarily wrong. There may be good reasons for making the inference. But what I'm trying to argue is that you need to take any distinction into account. Certainly, one thing that would facilitate interpretation of the experience as corresponding to some objective reality, would be some kind of psychic process. I still don't think that's sufficient, but it would open up some important new areas of discussion.

ROLL: I think something that also needs to be looked at is human creativity. So far I think most of us have looked at our subject matter as something "out there". And then we try to make sense of it. We regard ourselves as passive consumers or observers of whatever is going on. There is also the perspective of being made in the image of God—creators or co-creators of the universe—in that our theorizing and our conceptualizations may have a direct effect on the world. Our work in this field, or in any other field, allows for direct, original creativity, including creation through psychokinesis as a part of the enterprise. At this time the world is such a manifest mess it is just unbelievable. Our murderous nature, our ignorance, our irrationality, the amount of guns in this country, the ethnic cleansing, and so forth are beyond our understanding. Perhaps through some sort of miracle, people will listen to us at some time. What kind of world can we conceptualize that not only is true but also might provide healing? What kind of image followed by practice could provide healing? I think that is something for us to consider.

GROSSO: I just want to pick up on something that you started to say, Bill, that I didn't spell out in my talk on the creative role here. At first it may seem inconceivable, at least in terms of talking about life after death, that we should play a role in determining whether or not we do in fact survive bodily death. On the other hand, if we put the question of survival in an evolutionary perspective that idea may not be quite so fantastic as it may seem at first glance. Let me just suggest a question I've been asking myself. Instead of asking, "Do we, in fact, survive bodily death?" perhaps a more interesting question or an alternative question may be, "Are we, in fact, evolving the ability to survive bodily death?" After all, human history is only about 6,000 years old. For all we know the process whereby the ability (and I think it is accurate to talk about survival as an ability) may still be in process of emerging. This may account for the unevenness of the evidence, the confusion. The questions arise: Do some people survive bodily death? Are there degrees of intensity of consciousness required? It may be that the very process whereby some human beings acquire that ability to survive may still be evolving. And so, the question arises, "Maybe there are things that we can do and need to do to further that process along." I'm thinking, for example, of the Chinese book *The Secret of*

the Golden Flower. It was introduced by Carl Jung and translated by the German scholar Richard Wilhelm. The doctrine in the book is that not all of us achieve immortality or achieve the capability to survive bodily death. But rather, we have to undergo some kind of inner cultivation, some kind of development in the cohesiveness of our consciousness before that becomes possible. Now, that strikes me as being at least a plausible hypothesis. I just want to put that idea out for consideration. Perhaps we should rethink the question or rephrase the question: Not, "Do we survive?" but, "Are we evolving the ability to survive?"

ROLL: I think that G.I. Gurdjieff produced a system designed to ensure that kind of survival. But, this kind of survival frightens me a little. If we survive the way we are, in our egocentric physical state of mind, in our murderousness, in our tribalism (I think the psyche to a large extent is tribal with all that goes with it), "hell on earth" would have a new meaning. You see what I'm driving at now?

GROSSO: I think I do. But what I would say is this: The way we survive, if we do survive, and the way things turn out, is the way things turn out. It may be that only some people who die horrible deaths have been shocked into some kind of state of awareness that somehow survives bodily death. That might even square with some of the evidence. Or it may be that only extraordinary, saintly, highly evolved beings who attach themselves to or charge their psyches up, so to speak, in relationship to other human beings and their followers, reach the critical point of survivability. So, I simply don't know. I mean, nature is full of dark things.

ROLL: If we think in terms of healing, of wholeness, of the matrix of connectedness experienced in NDEs, then your continuation might be healing. Isn't that what psychologists are trying to be, healers, seeing and assisting others to experience things in wholeness? To me that's really what is at the bottom. That is our basic nature and that is what we are aiming for at the same time—our goal and our home.

OWENS: I wanted to pick up on something that John said about near-death experience and the interpretation of near-death experience. In analyzing several hundred narratives, I very much agree that this is an important distinction to make. It's a very rich area that is relatively unstudied. As the meta-cognition about the experience after the fact, it

can have a very complex and long-term unfolding process, especially if this is a completely new kind of experience for the person. It also can be quite agonizing. So, there are the wonderful after-effects; that's true. But sometimes it's a very rocky road that has to do with a lot of soul-searching and becoming on-the-street philosophers about just what is going on here. People are often all alone trying to figure this all out and they are compelled to do it. It is a huge area that is quite separate from the experience. I also wanted to mention an excellent article by Roger Shepard⁷ who is a cognitive psychologist. It is the study of visionary experience in the scientific process throughout history giving common examples like Friedrich Kekulé. The discovery of the structure of the benzene ring was preceded by a dream of a snake biting its tail. That's a fairly well-known case. But he has really given a thorough documentation of many instances of this kind throughout the history of science challenging the notion of how people think science proceeds.

LAWRENCE: To comment on what Justine and Bill said, an experience one of the patients that I interviewed had was after he had had the near-death experience and was leaving the hospital. It was a very cold day in January. As they were driving down the street leaving the hospital, which is in a very poor section, he saw someone on the road that didn't have very good clothes on given how cold it was. He said to his wife, "Stop the car. I want to give this man my coat." His wife said, "What are you, crazy? You want to stop in the middle of the slums? You want to stop the car?" "Yes, I want to give him my coat." I think this kind of altruistic feeling, this real desire to help and serve people, and to be much less materialistic is totally invalidated. People don't understand why this person feels this way. They don't understand why they want to help somebody. "Why would you dare stop in the middle of the street like that?" Even if they come back with this sense, the culture is such that it doesn't accept it and they struggle with dealing with it. How do they convince their immediate family members that this is an okay thing, "It's okay for me to give somebody my coat"? It's much better than shooting somebody, yet we can't buy

⁷ Shepard, R.N. (1978). The mental image. *American Psychologist*, 33(2), 125-137.

into that as a general cultural situation. I think if we're going to evolve into that kind of consciousness, we need to validate those experiences.

EDGE: I'm going to ask Eugene to respond to some of these questions and take us in a slightly different direction. It picks up on some points that have been made earlier about the difference between what really went on in an experience and one's interpretation of the experience. You made the statement referring to scientific approaches versus personal approaches that both may be wrong. I'm just wondering in what sense would they be wrong?

TAYLOR: Of course, the simplest example from the standpoint of personal experience is where we experience something and immediately believe that our explanation of it is the reality itself. From the scientific standpoint an example would be dreaming. When you study dreaming, the first thing a scientist wants to know is the physiology of it. The whole context for scientific investigation is already preestablished. In other words, the visionary has a metaphysical psychology of transcendence, and the scientist has a philosophy of reductionism. The philosophical frame of reference for each is the same in every case; whereas the data, the subject matter, may change. This points to the very interesting possibility that science is neither a theory nor a method but an attitude: a consensually validated way of approaching external, material reality for purposes of gaining some kind of control over it. The point that I was trying to make was that science only works in one domain of consciousness. But if you are really talking about, as John was bringing up, your interest in personal experience and the transformation of personality or something more simple like character development, or if you are just trying to become a better person, to live morally and aesthetically, or to speak in a poetic language, or embark on a personal search for the actualization of your destiny, these things to me represent a completely different domain from that of scientific inquiry. The very first problem comes when you confuse the two domains and try to construct a science of the spirit by blithely mixing them. So the two things don't really seem to fit together in our present state of consciousness. It's much like searching for the gene for celibacy.

EDGE: Actually, I just read in the newspaper they found something in that monogamous animals had a particular hormone.

TAYLOR: So you believe celibacy is inheritable? It seems to me that there are two ways to look at the example, funny as it may seem. One, it is quite plausible to posit and to even show potential biological mechanisms for not reproducing, which would then evolutionarily end that line. Such a mechanism could conceivably be an evolutionary quirk that would eliminate a whole domain that Mother Nature doesn't want and, basically, allow some other species to flourish. But the point (which I actually gave half in jest) was to say that there is a radical difference between biological sterility and willful conscious choice to cease reproducing. At the present level of our understanding we indiscriminately mix science and the process of inner experience. It seems more functional to me at this stage to separate them into two distinct domains and to start out as a dualist, even if in the midst of some transcendent experience they may all seem to be one. You've got to work for such an integration to achieve it. Then it only becomes one for you, not for anybody else. Just try and tell your oneness to your neighbor; you will quickly find that they have their own problems.

ROLL: I think that is a mistaken approach, Eugene. I'm very sorry to have to say that. Let me use a personal experience. Throughout most of my life I have had absolutely convincing out-of-body experiences. I knew I was out of the body. I knew I was in consensus reality. I was walking around my room. Everything was recognizable. Sometimes I would stick my hand through a wall, and that was kind of exciting. Other than that it was my familiar, personal self that was "out". But then I always wondered, "Is this real? Is this some sort of hallucination? Am I just dreaming, though it's so real that I don't think I am? Or what is it?" I began looking into out-of-body experiences that other people had had, including John Palmer's work. Then we did some experimentation with Keith Harary at Duke University. I found sometimes out-of-body experiences are consensual; sometimes they seem to be in the real world; and, sometimes they seem to be in a sort of mental or hallucinatory world or however you want to describe it. It's not the world of consensus reality. Then I had an out-of-body experience, which was the last one I have had. It was about ten years ago now. It was completely realistic. I got into a room in my house and stood in the doorway in my out-of-body form. I was so excited about the clarity of this experience and so frustrated that I could not really

check it. But then, fortunately, the moonlight came in through the double-doors and cast shadows on the floor. One of these shadows overlapped the rug. The moonlight hit a round table we had in the living room and the shadow fell across the rug in the living room. I told myself, "Now, I could not have known that this shadow would fall exactly this way at this time. So, I'm going to check it." I went down on hands and knees and put my hand to the floor. I measured the shadow as it stuck out from the rug. I felt the oak grain against my palm. It was so realistic. With this precious information, I moved down a hallway where, for some reason or other, I did not walk vertically; I walked slightly at an angle, as if I was on a different floor. I got into the bedroom which was pitch dark. I plunged into my bed, hoping that I would merge with my own body rather than with my wife's, which would have been really confusing! I aroused my body and went back into the sitting room to check the shadow. The sitting room was pitch black. There was no moonlight. I should have at least been able to figure that out before I went to bed. Not only was there no moonlight, but the shadow I saw could never fall the way I saw it either by artificial light or real light. I figured out that this was a mental world. I was in the world that I pictured. The out-of-body experience is probably in a mental world though it may have ESP elements. That is something that John has pointed out. For me there was a combination of the empirical and the experiential. By combining the two, I thought I could figure out what was happening. From that I took the further step by saying the out-of-body self is very real experientially, but not quite real consensually. Before this I was convinced that life would continue for me in the out-of-body form I was familiar with in my out-of-body experiences. Now, having done further exploration of one kind or another, I feel that the out-of-body self can be projected from the body. The OBE has a biological function when it happens during life-threatening situations because when you think you are out of the body, you leave the body alone. The body can then heal itself. But the surviving self, the continuing self, the psychic self is not the out-of-body self. I'm sorry for this rather long spiel. We need to check the experiential against the empirical.

TAYLOR: I completely agree. But you have to separate them in order to do that. There is some extraordinary training that must happen

first and it should not be just the training that we get from the material, empirical sciences. In other words, it has to be training with regard to the immaterial. And we know practically nothing about that in the West. An example of the immaterial is teaching martial arts. It is possible to train people in mechanical techniques and as a result to have really remarkable psychic events befall them because they enter into non-ordinary states of reality. In a dangerous situation, the conditions of the moment are so radically changed that you enter back into this non-ordinary state and can now function in it. If you try and stay in your everyday rational state, you are not going to make it through the situation because everyone else involved is moving through a non-ordinary reality. You have had training in moving through such a reality because all of your cues are internal. Even though everything is shifting around you, you use your internal centering in order to function. Then you become a focal point of balance to reconstruct reality around yourself very quickly. In this way you avoid becoming simply another victim of circumstance even though things appear to be spiraling out of control around you. So, in a simple situation like that there is a training and honing of the animal instincts, at the same time that you have the capacities of willful consciousness that are still active but in quite extraordinary ways. Think of Houdini, who said, "Show me anything claimed to be done by psychic means, and I'll show you how to do exactly the same thing physically." But then, of course, Houdini, while he was sitting there telling you this, might be tying and untying knots with his toes under the table just to keep himself in shape. The idea is that it is possible to do these things, but we normally are not trained to do them.

Having said that, I want to pick up on one thing that Madelaine said. I am struck by the anecdotal accounts of these non-ordinary realities which suggests that some states are experienced as psychopathological and some transcendent. When there is a transcendent experience, your relation to other people is automatically transformed. There is some relationship between having seen that higher reality, that is, knowing that it is there, and living with a supreme hopefulness instead of a supreme despair. No matter what happens to you, the fact that you have seen something higher and you could get through it, gives you a completely different sense for where

other people are psychically in their own development. You are then liable to reach out to other people from that domain. There seems to me to be an interesting relationship we don't understand between transcendence and healing which is different from experiencing a psychopathic state. Access to the transcendent may be the basis of all healing, regardless of whether what the healer does is based on scientific medicine or not.

EDGE: Bill, have your out-of-body experiences changed over time? You mentioned sticking your hand through the wall during this last one. It seemed obvious to me that your out-of-the-body experience was embodied in a particular way. Has that always been the case?

ROLL: I have always had the sense of being in a body. I always had the sense of walking on the floor, for instance, and of having a specific point of view from which I perceived things.

EDGE: I'm really wondering whether or not the development of your theory of the embodied person might have, in fact, affected your experience out-of-the-body.

ROLL: This last out-of-body experience was the most vivid of them all and it falsified my theory. I didn't have any more after that. It was as if I now had the answer and could turn to something else. I have not had any other out-of-body experiences since that one. I don't know if that helps.

PARANORMAL EXPERIENCES OF PREVIOUSLY UNCONSCIOUS PATIENTS

MADELAINE M. LAWRENCE

As a former critical care nurse, I was responsible for many unconscious patients and was told to talk to them; many medical professionals held the belief—largely unproven—that hearing is "...the last sense to go." Even though the patient may be unresponsive, he or she could still be hearing what is being said by those around him or her.

When a former patient came to a class on near-death experiences taught by Kenneth Ring, I became fascinated by what she said she could hear while we presumed her to be unconscious. This encounter stimulated my interest in these types of events, and I began a research project to document incidents during which patients were unconscious.

To date, I have interviewed more than 100 patients who were clinically unconscious and have found that, in addition to being able to hear sounds from the surrounding environment while perceived to be unconscious, some of these patients have described one or more of five states of unconsciousness: (a) unconsciousness, (b) perceived unconsciousness, (c) paranormal experiences, (d) inner consciousness, and (e) distorted consciousness.

This paper concentrates on the paranormal experiences of these patients, which I have divided into four categories: (a) near-death experiences (NDEs), (b) out-of-body experiences (OBEs) not associated with near-death experiences, (c) near-death visits, and (d) visions of the Grim Reaper.

Subjects

Most of the subjects whom I studied had been admitted to Hartford Hospital, a major teaching facility in Connecticut, and were identified through weekly unit rounds. All had documented episodes of unconsciousness; a taped interview and chart audit were conducted for each subject. To date, the study includes 111 patients: 11 from the pilot

study and the remaining from the Hartford Hospital study. In the majority of the cases, I interviewed the patients within days of their unconscious experiences. There were some subjects whom I did not reach until almost a year had elapsed. In a very few instances, I talked with people many years after the event. At times, people described not only recent but past experiences as well.

The Hartford Hospital patients were suggested as suitable candidates for my study by my colleagues in the various units throughout the facility, and I had access to their medical records to verify their conditions and unconscious states. In some cases, I sent letters to patients who had been discharged, informing them of the research and inviting them to take part. Patients from the pilot study were selected because they were willing to participate, having been referred to me by colleagues and friends.

Many nurses and doctors at Hartford Hospital were aware of my research, and even though I told them that I was interested in interviewing *any* unconscious patients, they had a tendency to refer to me those people who had had unusual experiences. There were also instances where patients were discharged before I had a chance to talk with them or situations in which patients never responded to my follow-up letters after they had left the hospital. Of course, there were some individuals who simply didn't want to discuss their experiences with me.

A number of researchers have reported the frequency of positive near-death experiences (Greyson, 1984; Ring, 1980; Sabom, 1982) ranging from 30% to 40%. The frequency of negative near-death experiences is often estimated to range between 3% and 7%. In one report, however, a psychiatrist working with cardiac arrest patients estimated the incidence of paranormal experiences to be as low as 2% (Cassem, 1991).

In my pilot study, 27% of the people had had near-death experiences. In 9% of the cases, there was an out-of-body experience not associated with an NDE.

Of the 100 patients in my Hartford Hospital study, 22% reported some type of paranormal event. 8% had a near-death experience; one person had a positive *and* negative experience. 6% had an out-of-body

occurrence not associated with an NDE. 8% had near-death visitors, and two patients had encounters with the "Grim Reaper".

For this paper, I will draw on the experiences of 25 patients: 3 from the pilot study and 22 from the Hartford Hospital research. Since some individuals reported more than one paranormal experience, I'll be dealing with 28 events:

- 11 near-death experiences (NDEs)
- 7 out-of-body experiences (OBEs) not associated with near-death
- 8 near-death visits
- 2 encounters with the Grim Reaper

Near-Death Experiences

The NDE phenomenon has existed for a long time; our renewed interest in these events is only the most recent such phase. Some of the earliest writings regarding near-death experiences came from mountain climbing incidents. People who fell great distances and yet survived would often describe circumstances that they had undergone which were very similar to the typical NDE we encounter today.

When our ability to resuscitate critically ill patients improved, those survivors of cardiac arrest situations—as well as other near-death events—also began to relate their unusual experiences. Unfortunately, the society often considers the discussion of these types of occurrences as weird or crazy, and often those people who undergo such incidents are reluctant to talk about them.

In 1975, the publication of Raymond Moody's book *Life After Life* stressed that NDEs are not nearly as unique as people had previously assumed and that they occur to normal people who are in abnormal circumstances: near death. The thorough documentation of these cases in *Life After Life* served to lend credibility to such events, as did another book that followed, Ken Ring's *Life At Death*, which was presented as the first scientific study of near-death experiences.

Both Moody and Ring described NDEs in similar ways. Typically, patients close to death will feel euphoric, experiencing a total lack of any pain, anxiety, or stress. They describe themselves as feeling totally

at peace and will often characterize the event as the most wonderful thing they have ever gone through. I have also found that it is not unusual for people to get tears in their eyes when they talk about the pure love they have felt.

If they go farther into the NDE, they often experience out-of-body events, telepathic communications, passage through a tunnel-like structure, encountering a being of light, some sort of barrier, and a decision or charge to return to the "real world". Often, they arrive at this decision by interacting with dead friends or relatives whom they see during the NDE.

The following are detailed descriptions of the various components of NDEs from the perspective of those who have experienced them.

Out-of-body experiences during near-death experiences. Out-of-body experiences sometimes occur in conjunction with near-death experiences. During the OBEs, patients often describe in vivid detail the attempts to resuscitate them. Arnold, a patient whom I interviewed, discussed watching his own open heart surgery:

"They wheeled me into the operating room, and Doctor Traynor said that I was going to feel a little pinch in my chest and I did—I felt the pinch. Then, I was waiting for him to tell me some more, but I realized I wasn't there anymore. He didn't have to tell me anything—I could see him. I was up at the ceiling, looking down at him and the rest of them."

"The rest of them?"

"There were two other doctors, a nurse assistant, I guess, and an anesthesiologist. I had the whole view, and I could look through those that I didn't choose to see what they were doing."

"You could see through the people?"

"I saw them, but I could look through them. My vision was able to penetrate the two doctors and the table so I could look down at Doctor Traynor's boots. They looked longer than others, but I guess that's because he has such short little legs. He was standing on a pad for static electricity. He told me later that that's what it was for. And I told him that he was wearing glasses. I had never seen him with glasses before, but he said that during the operation he sometimes wears special glasses."

Patients usually exhibit an indifferent attitude toward their bodies, feeling no anxiety about being removed from their physical vessels. Arnold's response was typical when I asked him:

"What was your reaction to being out of your body and seeing it on the operating table?"

"Kind of 'Who cares?' The real me was up on the ceiling. What I was looking at was something I used to travel in. Kind of like a grocery bag. I didn't feel any compassion. I didn't have any feeling for what was there. I was curious about what they were doing. The two people were taking a vein out of my leg, and Doctor Traynor was handling my heart, but none of that mattered anymore."

"What did you look like...up on the ceiling?"

"I was the real Arnie. There was nothing spiritual about me. Down there was the old thing I travelled in—the carrying case that used to tote me around. I had no feeling for it. I was the real Arnie, up here."

"Did you have arms and legs?"

"I had my head and my right arm and my left leg. Bizarre. That's all I took with me, but I felt whole. I was up there physically, and I was connected, but there was space in between my head and my arm—and my whole body was gone except for the left foot. I was suspended up there—like floating."

This casual perspective of the physical body is quite common among patients who have undergone an OBE. One woman was quite blunt in her assessment. When I asked her how she felt about seeing her body below, she replied, "Honey, do you need to lose weight!"

Along with this objective analysis of their bodies goes a lack of concern about dying. They often say that they felt so wonderful that it was immaterial that they were no longer part of the reality to which they were accustomed. I have asked these people what they look like when they are out of their bodies, but most—unlike Arnold—are not aware of whether they have arms or legs or any specific physical appearance. While they are quite observant of the surroundings above which they are floating, they pay little attention to the form that they themselves are taking.

Occasionally, a patient will describe being able to see into adjacent rooms, but generally their attention is focused on the immediate area

where their physical bodies are located. In one notable exception, a patient experiencing cardiac arrest claimed that she was out of her body and could see the roof of the hospital, where she reported spotting a red shoe in the corner of the roof. She was so adamant about her OBE that one of the residents got the janitor to open the door to the roof, where the resident did indeed find one red shoe.

Telepathy. Telepathy plays a major role *during* the NDEs. Patients often say that they understand what is being said in the hospital room or operating room, but not because they are able to *hear* the words. They talk about just "knowing things"—about being able to "...hear it inside my head."

No sense of time. While the patients subsequently describe these events in a linear way, they will point out that that is not how they experienced them. The NDE seems to occur all at once and very quickly. So far, we have been unable to establish any correlation between the length of time that a person is actually unconscious and the depth of his near-death experience.

Tunnel or passageway. At the next stage, near-death patients describe moving through a long tunnel or passageway that leads them toward a light. This description has been around for hundreds of years; Bosch, a fifteenth century artist, has depicted such events in his paintings.

Being of light. People report encountering a being of light and often talk about communicating with it. Sometimes they are given a choice about staying there or returning to the reality that they've known. Sometimes they are told that it is not their time to die and that they have to go back.

Barriers. I have interviewed a few patients who have reported encountering barriers: a river, a wall, an embankment—something that has to be crossed in order to go on. Some patients do not want to proceed and consequently come back. Others, however, are overwhelmed by the feelings of happiness and euphoria and only return

to reality because they are told that they have unfinished business to which they must attend. Some people report that they decided for themselves that it was not yet their time to go.

While there are similarities among many of the near-death reports, there is usually something unique about each experience. One man told me that during his NDE he encountered a very bright light that hurt his eyes; he also saw a mound—the typical barrier—and a coconut tree with a brightly-colored parrot—very atypical. He described the bird in great detail: red breast, green feathers/wings, and a yellow beak. It was an image that he said would stay with him for the rest of his life.

That sort of reaction is one that patients frequently relate to me. They seem to experience these NDE events more intensely than they do reality (as we generally define it).

Dead friends and relatives. A patient will often report seeing and talking to friends or relatives who have died. They may be the ones who communicate to the patient that he or she must return. One of the most unusual cases that I encountered involved a woman, 54-year-old Louise, who was rushed to the hospital with an asthma attack. After twenty minutes in the emergency room, she was transferred to the intensive care unit where she was hooked up to a cardiac monitor and a ventilator. When she went into a systole arrest, the doctors were unable to revive her and, twenty minutes later, disconnected her from the equipment. Ten minutes after that, she began to breathe on her own.

She should have been dead or brain damaged but was neither. When I talked with her following the event, she was pleasant and quite willing to discuss it.

"The first thing I remember is that people were calling my name...but they were very far away."

"Who were the people?" I asked her.

"I don't know. Maybe it was the nurse. It was dark. I was walking to this place, but I wasn't sure where I was. And then I saw a coffin."

"Where was it?"

"In a room."

"Did you recognize the room?"

"Uh-uh, but I knew the coffin was mine."

"Yours?"

She nodded. "I didn't know where the room was, but I knew it was my coffin. And I also knew that it wasn't my time to go."

"How did you know that?"

"There were two people in the room. A man and a woman. Bobby and Grace."

"People you knew?"

She nodded again. "Bobby was a friend of Brian's [her son]. He died three or four years ago. Of AIDS."

"And Grace?"

"She's my friend. She died this past year." Louise paused. "There was a light around both of them. Bobby did most of the talking, but they both told me that I was going to be fine—that it wasn't my time yet. They said I had to go back."

There was a long silence before I asked her, "Then what?"

"Then I woke up."

"How do you feel about this experience?"

"Okay."

"Okay? That's it?"

"Well, this happened to me before."

"What happened before?"

"Seeing people who have died."

"When?"

"Years ago. Brian was only a boy then. Nine or ten. I had another bad attack. Almost died that time, too. But that time, I kind of went out of my body, you know? I could see myself lying there. And I saw a real bright light. Irene was there."

"Another friend of yours?"

"Yes. She had died, too. Before me. Said that it wasn't my time—that I had to go back."

"Just like this time?"

"Sort of." She hesitated. "But that time, I knew why I had to come back. To take care of my three kids. This time, I don't know what I'm supposed to do."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know what my purpose is this time—why I was supposed to come back."

"Did you *not* want to come back?"

"It's not that, exactly. It's just that..." She hesitated again. "It was such a beautiful experience. The most beautiful experience ever."

"Were you afraid?"

She shook her head. "I'm not afraid to die. I haven't been...for a long time. Since the first time."

There are many accounts of individuals who have been pronounced dead and yet "returned" to life. What is not known is the frequency with which these people have near-death experiences. Health science researchers are investigating the distinctions between clinical death and biological death, but few, if any, researchers are studying the paranormal aspects of this phenomenon.

While it happens rarely, I did have one subject who talked about seeing a young boy during his NDE who was still alive but dying of cancer. When the patient returned from his near-death event, he was reluctant to talk with the father of the child he had seen; the boy died shortly thereafter.

This type of experience is disconcerting to even the most level-headed, scientifically-oriented individual. During one of my presentations to an organization of physicians, I discussed this phenomenon, and a doctor in the audience stood and related to the group that one of his patients had recently seen *him* during an NDE. There was plenty of good-natured kidding from his colleagues, but it was quite clear that the physician was experiencing substantial anxiety as a result of that event.

There have also been reports of instances in which a patient will have a near-death experience, encountering a friend or relative who has died prior to the NDE but without the patient's knowledge. During the NDE, the patient is convinced that the person she encounters is now dead; when she awakens, through questioning of other loved ones, she confirms that fact.

Out-of-Body Experiences Not Associated With Near-Death Experiences

Out-of-body events have occurred to some people even when they are not near death. In one such example, Heather, who was 52 years

old when we met, talked about an incident that had happened 27 years before, during the birth of her eldest son:

"How many of the details do you still remember?" I asked Heather.

"It's really pretty clear, even after all this time. Doctor Mills was there with me... and a nurse. It was a very long labor. I was exhausted. I told them that I wasn't going to do it anymore."

"How long had you been in labor?"

"From eight in the morning to eight in the evening. It was really intense. I asked the doctor for some medication, but he said no—that I had to help myself. You know, 'You have to work at it.' That kind of thing.

"Of course, it never would have happened no matter how hard I worked, because the baby's head couldn't fit through my pelvic bones. But anyway...the labor was going on and on, and he was telling me to keep working at it. The pain was really severe, and I remember thinking to myself: I've got to get out of here. I mean, I was getting very nervous and..." She shrugged. "That was sort of the last thing I remember before..."

"Were you pushing?"

"Oh yes. Couldn't help it. I kept thinking that I had to get out of there—that I had to get away from that pain. And the next thing I remember, I was looking down on myself. I was on the ceiling, in the corner. Dave [her husband] asked me yesterday if I was going to talk to you about this from the ceiling." She fidgeted a bit. "You know what I mean? He made me feel a little strange. People kid about it, you know?"

"Do people kid you frequently?"

"Kid *me*? Oh no. I don't tell anyone about it."

"I thought you—"

"I mean, people laugh about other people who have any kind of out-of-body experiences. I didn't tell anyone. Except Dave." A long pause.

"And now you."

"Nobody else?"

"Not in twenty-seven years."

That, unfortunately, is a rather common reaction. And, because of this reluctance to discuss OBEs, it is very difficult as a researcher to determine the actual percentage of unconscious patients who undergo out-of-body events. Heather went on to say:

"I felt great. Light...very light. And no pain at all. I could see myself, and I wasn't frightened anymore."

"Were they saying anything?"

"I couldn't hear them. There were sort of waves underneath me. Like heat waves, you know? They kind of shimmered. I kept thinking that if I stayed up there—above the heat waves and didn't go down below—that I wouldn't feel any pain. It was dead silent and soft...and no pain at all."

Heather talked about her reluctance to return to her body—her resistance to going below the waves, where she knew she would experience the pain again—and I asked her:

"When you were up on the ceiling, did you ever think that maybe you had died?"

"Nope."

"You felt like you always did?"

She nodded. "I was relieved and comfortable...and just like me. I didn't think, 'Oh, you're crazy.' I was me."

When we concluded the interview, I asked:

"Do you think this has affected your life in any way?"

"No, I can't say that it has." She paused. "Other than the fact that, to this day, 27 years later, it's absolutely clear. Whenever I think about it, I can feel the way I felt when I was in the corner of the room. Calm and peaceful and out of it. Away from the stresses of trying to have the baby."

Six other patients with whom I talked who also described being out of their bodies and looking down at themselves often reported being at peace. They experienced the absence of pain but not the emotions of love reported by NDE subjects. These non-NDE OBEs also described just their immediate surroundings.

For example, one man observed himself during a stress test and, like many such patients, experienced apprehension about being out of his body; he was anxious to return to his physical form. Unlike the descriptions in some parapsychology literature, none of my patients talked about a cord or any other connection linking their out-of-body essence to their corporeal forms.

Most patients who undergo such experiences are convinced that they were out of their bodies. They don't describe the events as psychological phenomena in the way that they might relate hallucinations or dreams. To them, the OBE was just another form of reality.

In Crookall's (1972) book, *Case-Book of Astral Projection 545-746*, several of the out-of-body astral projection events would, I believe, now be considered near-death experiences. A number of Crookall's subjects mentioned a feeling of peace and talked about travelling through a tunnel; they also discussed being given a choice or being told to return.

Definitions that clearly distinguish non-death-related OBEs from NDE/OBEs are necessary to avoid ambiguity in this area of research.

Near-Death Visits

A book entitled *Peak in Darien Experiences* (Cobbe, 1882) described dying people who were visited by friends or relatives who were deceased. Occasionally, these dying patients would talk about seeing someone whom they didn't know had died but had, in fact, passed away. In 1926, the classic *Death-Bed Visions* by Barrett recounted more of these events. In 1961, Osiris did a survey of doctors and nurses, discovering that the medical personnel reported about 10% of their dying patients as having deathbed visions in which they talked of seeing someone from the hereafter who had come to help "...lead them across." Deathbed visions and near-death visits seem to be related phenomena.

Near-death visits almost always involve friends or relatives who have died. The patients see, hear, or sense these people and, in many cases, communicate with them, interpreting the presence of the visitors as having one or both of two purposes: to provide them comfort and support and/or to take them to "the other side". One patient who sensed her mother's presence was not yet ready to die and didn't want to go with her mother. A man who sensed his father's presence said that he could smell the chemicals with which his father had frequently worked; he felt as if his father had come to comfort him.

Another patient, 59-year-old Ronald, had gone into cardiac arrest at home and described his near-death visit to me:

"I was with my son-in-law, and I had gotten out of the chair I was sitting in and walked into the kitchen. I got light-headed, and that was the last thing I remember until waking up in the hospital—except for the experience."

"Which was...?"

"This was longer than the other one. My brothers and my father—all deceased—were standing above me. I wasn't lying down—I was standing up—and they were above me, like in a cloud, and they were waving me to come on. They were talking, but I couldn't hear what they were saying. I couldn't make out the words, but I could see them waving to me to come on, come on, and I was saying no, no, I don't want to go.

"And that lasted quite a while, or at least it seemed to last longer. Of course, I was out a lot longer. I went into arrest, and they called the emergency people, and by the time they came to resuscitate me, it was some time."

"What's the last thing you remember in the episode?"

"Saying no, no."

"When you had the arrest and could see your father and brother, were you out of your body?"

"No. I was still in my body. Lying down. Well, I wasn't lying down, I was standing up. They were up above me in the cloud, waving for me to come on."

"This was during the cardiac arrest, and you were standing up?"

"Yes, I was standing."

When I checked with other family members, I found that Ronald had indeed undergone the arrest much as he described, but at no time from the beginning of the attack to the arrival of the emergency medical technicians was he standing.

"And you felt like you were still in your body?" I asked.

"Yes, I did. I felt that I was still myself, and I was still in my body, and I wasn't going to give it up. That was the resistance. Of course, it's been so long that maybe I'm clouding it a little bit with my feeling now, but at the time I knew I was resisting going with them."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I tell myself now that I didn't want to go because they were dead—that's my interpretation of it—but at the time, I didn't know why I didn't want to go."

"It was your brother and your father?"

"Two brothers. I have two brothers who are deceased."

"How did they look?"

"Like they always looked."

"Had they aged at all?"

"They looked about the same as they did when they died. My father was quite elderly, and they were quite young." He was silent for a moment. "Now, my mother was deceased, but she wasn't there, which is strange."

"Do you have any idea why?"

"I really don't know. I thought about it a lot. She died a long time ago. I mean, many years before them. So maybe that's it. Maybe it's the span of time. I really don't have a lot of recall of my mother, but my father and my brothers...I grew up with them and had an adult life with them."

"You said that they were waving and talking."

"Yes, but I couldn't hear what they were saying. They kept waving come on, and I kept saying no. And that seemed to be a long time. I was out for something like thirty-six hours before I regained consciousness."

"Were they dressed?"

"Yes, in regular clothes, but the thing is, I couldn't describe them. I have tried to think about whether they were dressed in clothes of the time or in clothes of today or something like robes. I've tried to remember that, but I can't."

During my research, a patient reported having near-death visits from his mother and his sister. His mother had died some years before, but his sister was still alive when he became seriously ill. Upon awakening, the man asked his wife how his sister was. Not wanting to aggravate his condition, she replied that the woman was fine, even though, in reality, she had died while her brother had been near death. He continued to believe, in spite of his wife's insistence to the contrary, that his sister was dead.

Visions of the Grim Reaper

I interviewed two patients who reported seeing the Grim Reaper. One man said that he awoke after a cardiac arrest to find a dark, hooded, cold figure at the foot of his bed. He described the figure as a faceless man who was nonetheless frightening. When I asked him how he knew it was a man, he responded that he couldn't explain it—that he just knew. He said that he also knew that he wasn't bad enough or sick enough to go with this hooded figure.

Another subject—Arnold, to whom I referred earlier in this paper, encountered the Grim Reaper during his near-death experience:

"I was the real Arnie. There was nothing spiritual about me. Down there was the old thing I travelled in—the carrying case that used to tote me around. I had no feeling for it. I was the real Arnie, up here."

"Did you have arms and legs?"

"I had my head and my right arm and my left leg. Bizarre. That's all I took with me, but I felt whole. I was up there physically, and I was connected, but there was space in between my head and my arm—and my whole body was gone except for the left foot. I was suspended up there—like floating."

"Could you hear?"

"No, I didn't hear anything. And, after making the decision that all of this was of no interest to me, I decided that I should do something else. I didn't know what else to do, but watching operations was not one of them. Upon making that decision...BAM...immediately I was engulfed in total, pitch black. The total absence of any color."

"How did you feel in the middle of all this darkness?"

"Scared. It was totally foreign to me. And then this entity came out of the blackness toward me, looking like what we'd call the Grim Reaper."

"What *did* he look like?"

"Skeletal. Yellowish. And it had moving robes. Now, I could've been conditioned to see something like that, but I never saw a Halloween costume that spooky. And there was a hand coming from the darkness, motioning for me to come toward it—toward the entity."

"What was your reaction?"

"I was frightened. But I was also thinking, 'Well, he's the only thing I can identify here...the rest is total black.' So I thought that maybe I should pay attention to his directions, until I began to feel that he was

trying to trick me into doing something other than I'm supposed to do. And through the telepathy, he indicated to me that I should be heading toward the light. Now, I had no idea what he meant by the light other than maybe as a child I remember hearing about that stuff where you go through a tunnel and everything, but I never believed in any of that. But he said I should be going toward the light, and I thought that he was making some sense."

"Can you describe him in a little more detail?"

"A skeleton. A skull...incessantly chattering. The teeth moving all the time. It was yellowish with the typical black eyes. There was a black cloak, constantly moving; it was illuminated by its yellowishness. The hands were skeletal—just bones—and motioning for me to come toward it.

"Then, he swirled his hand in the air," Arnold said as he made a circular motion with his own hand, "and made kind of a light area, like a tunnel. And he said, 'Go in there,' and I said no. That wasn't what I was supposed to do. I think anyone with the IQ of a turnip would have known that it wasn't a real light. He just made a hole there, and out of nowhere, he produced some yellow, acrid-looking stuff that he threw in the hole and swirled it around. And he said, 'You have a golden light. Go to it now.' But I refused.

"And when I refused, the darkness left, and I was in a domed, lit-up area, like an amphitheater. Everything just lightened up, and I wasn't scared anymore, just hanging in this area."

It is possible that the appearance of the Grim Reaper is a natural extension of the myths about death to which most adults are exposed. However, following one of my presentations about my research, a woman from the audience talked with me about having seen a dark, cloaked, skeletal figure at the foot of her bed when she was sick with polio. At the time, she was only six years old. The figure was silent, and when she made it clear that she didn't want to go with him, he slowly faded away.

Very little has been written about the Grim Reaper in conjunction with near-death phenomena. A few articles in *Fate* were the only sources I could locate (Chorvinsky, 1992, 1993).

Summary

Documentation of these experiences does not answer the questions posed by parapsychologists for years: does the "spirit" or "essence" of the patients actually leave their physical forms and travel elsewhere? Do these people really encounter the Grim Reaper and/or deceased friends and relatives? Or, do they just imagine all of it?

Much more research needs to be done to answer these questions with any sense of certainty. There are, nevertheless, several conclusions that I have drawn from my study.

1. The medical community needs to be aware of the frequency and the impact of these paranormal events. The acceptance by doctors and nurses of these patient experiences would substantially improve the interaction between the two groups, which would, in turn, lead to more effective patient recovery.

2. Loved ones of the patients involved in these paranormal events not only need to understand the reality of the experience to the patients but should also recognize the long-term effect that such events can have on the participants' lives. People who have undergone a near-death experience very often view death—and, as a consequence, life—in an entirely new light. This change in perspective can have a profound impact on the ways in which a paranormal participant approaches his or her job, family, and relationships.

These loved ones should also create a caring environment in which the prior patient feels comfortable talking about the event that has been experienced. Heather, who was very uneasy when telling her husband about her OBE, should not have had to wait 27 years before talking about it with another human being.

3. The paranormal participant needs to realize that he or she is not so unique—that these experiences occur hundreds of times a day around the world to normal, well-adjusted children and adults. The ability to discuss the paranormal events freely and openly is essential to a healthy mental recovery for the prior patient.

Although my study encompasses a limited number of patients within a specific geographic area, I still think that it is representative of paranormal events experienced by hospital patients everywhere. I also believe that more investigation needs to be done to analyze the true

nature of these events and that the possibilities for paranormal research are greater now than they ever have been. We now know, for instance, that a group of cardiac patients is likely to have a certain percentage of near-death experiences, presenting increased opportunities for study of these events.

Until we are able to more accurately define "what really happens", we must recognize the reality of the event to the participant and acknowledge that reality. Only then will we become an aid rather than an impediment to the patient's continuing recovery.

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DISCUSSION

GROSSO: On the question of evidence of life after death, I think most people would agree this is not the strongest in terms of categories, although subjectively it is for those who have the experience. But there's one item that I would like you to comment on in terms of

possibly implying, suggesting, or supporting the notion that these experiences are related to survival, and that is the fairly consistent reports that people either having near-death experiences or having deathbed visions tend to see primarily people who are already dead. I think Karlis Osis made that point in his study of deathbed visions. You would think that if folks were just hallucinating they would hallucinate both the living and the dead. I would guess they would hallucinate people who are emotionally close to them, their spouses, immediate family, and so on. But there does seem to be that consistency of seeing apparitions of dead people and often people that they didn't know were dead. That makes it even more provocative. Do you have any comments on that?

LAWRENCE: I would agree that in general that is true; people who have near-death experiences do report seeing people who have died. Occasionally, however, they do see people who are living, but they know that they are living. They make a clear distinction between the ones that they know have died and the ones that they know are alive. In one of the cases I had the person saw a young boy during his near-death experience. He knew he was still alive at the time. But he knew, also, that he was going to die. When he came back, he was very troubled about whether to say anything to the family. The boy did subsequently die. But they do make the clear distinction about what state those people are in.

PALMER: I have a couple of definitional quibbles. I'm not sure that the term "unconscious" is really what you mean. Under the heading "unconscious" you list things like "feeling fine" or "having limited awareness". "Unconscious" means nothing is going on. So, maybe you want to use another term there.

Also, you seem to be putting near-death experiences and out-of-body experiences at the same level of description. I think a better way would be to treat near-death experience as your umbrella category, as any anomalous experience that occurs at the time of near-death, and then things like out-of-body experiences and near-death visions become sub-categories of that.

LAWRENCE: The unconscious description that I used is actually the patients' description and from a phenomenological point of view, which is really what I was trying to do. That was how they described

it when they were unconscious—that there was nothing. I don't disagree with what you're saying. But from the personal point of view of the experiencer, they will describe being unconscious as nothing coming in from the outside and maybe some sense of themselves. I agree with your next statement in terms of the category. I think in some ways it's unfortunate because near-death experience, or NDE, is now used to describe people who have this euphoric feeling, go out of their bodies, go through the tunnel, etc. Maybe if we called it "around-death experiences" or something. Unfortunately it has already been named with a very broad term.

ROLL: What definition in a broad way?

LAWRENCE: For most of the people who do the research—Ken Ring, Raymond Moody, Bruce Greyson—the near-death experience is typically descriptions of people who have gone through the tunnel, etc.

ROLL: I thought they would include OBEs.

LAWRENCE: A near-death experience can include an out-of-body experience as part of it. But then there are some patients who are close to death or who become unconscious, who also can have an out-of-body experience that is not associated with this near-death experience. We haven't clearly defined the distinction between a plain old ordinary out-of-body experience and this whole phenomena called NDE.

ROLL: Maybe you should do that in your paper because it really is seriously confusing.

LAWRENCE: It's interesting because I tried to do that. I was doing research at the Eileen J. Garrett Library not too long ago to try to look at some of the case studies of astral projection. Some of those now, I think, would be classified as near-death experiences because they talked about this feeling of peace and going through the tunnel. Those are very old descriptions, but now I think they would be called probably something different.

PALMER: There are a couple of things you mentioned about near-death experiences that also apply to other altered states of consciousness. For example, in parapsychology we have a procedure that we use to try to facilitate free response ESP called the ganzfeld. It is a short-term sensory deprivation procedure where we put ping-pong balls over people's eyes, have them look into a red light, and listen to a pleasant version of white noise. I mention this because it's very

common in that experience for people to mention time distortions. Either time does not seem to exist, or it is distorted in some way. It varies exactly how that manifests from one person to another. Also, there have been some extensive case studies and surveys, one of which I did, which included out-of-body experiences that were not necessarily near-death experiences or part of near-death experiences. Telepathic experiences in conjunction with OBEs were reported relatively frequently, with something like 8-10% of the OBEers in our survey. They might have included some near-death experiences also; we didn't make that distinction. A lot of the people who have extensive out-of-body experiences and report them or write books about them will report telepathy, as well. The case that you mentioned about a person actually being dead and having a near-death experience, if true, is a dualist's dream. If this could be very firmly documented, it certainly would get me rethinking my position. I just wonder (and here is my own ignorance) to what extent we can really say that a person is brain dead because they have no pulse, could it be that the brain is still using its residual oxygen? I don't know the status of that. I think this gets back to the point we were making earlier: What do we mean by "near-death"? Because this evidence is potentially so valuable, it is a very important thing to try to pin down.

LAWRENCE: I completely agree with your last statement. There was a report of someone in New York City who had actually been taken to the morgue. I called. I tried to get the doctors to give her a message that I wanted to interview her to see what would happen. Some health care professionals are reluctant to have people talk about it because they feel they have made a mistake, that this was a misdiagnosis. It could very well have been; or, it could be something else. But you are kind of closed off to that. I think that is another avenue that certainly is very ripe for exploration.

TAYLOR: On this example you have given of the person who had no pulse, no activity for 20 minutes, I thought of a comparable situation that might be near it. This is the phenomenon of pit burial. A person who is advanced in yoga practice is able to consciously influence his or her metabolism and to lower it to such a rate that they can experience deprivations which are considered anomalous to physicians who are in the waking state looking at them. There is some

conservative function, some hibernating response that the person was able to get some kind of conscious control over. It is very obvious that if this can happen during training and the person can emerge completely intact, it could spontaneously happen with some of these other cases.

On a different point altogether, I would like to speak to the term "unconscious," since John brought it up. Hallowel Davis, the famous physiologist, had to sit in for John Cunningham Lilly one time, moderating a panel on consciousness. Of course, Lilly was the dolphin man who studied altered states. Davis was an arch proponent of reductionistic science. When Davis gave his own definition of "consciousness" he did so from the standpoint of a laboratory physiologist. For him, the range of consciousness simply went from coma to hyper-excitability. There was no mention of the unconscious. There was no reference to a language of transcendence as far as altered states were concerned. So, we have this one definition of consciousness within the context of medical science physiologically linked. Another definition is historical, Freud derived his understanding of the unconscious from his reading of Arthur Schopenhauer, Eduard von Hartmann, and philosophers of the English tradition, like Edward Carpenter and Henry Maudsley. Meanwhile, he appropriated the ideas of Jean-Martin Charcot and Hippolyte Bernheim. Freud then superimposed the results of his own self-analysis onto a radically different French view of inner experience. So, we have the word "unconscious", referring to many of the dynamics that we associate with psychoanalytic theory, as opposed to the word "subconscious" or "co-conscious phenomena" which originally came from the French tradition and had been dominant from about 1880 to 1920 in world psychotherapy. Psychopathologists, as they were called, presumed, using F.W.H. Meyers's ideas, that we had within us multiple states of consciousness both lower as well as higher than normal, everyday waking awareness. Consciousness was not equivalent to awareness. You could be unconscious of another state, but it could be superior to the one that you were presently in and it could be more conscious in that sense from a linguistic standpoint. They rejected the term "unconscious" because it gives a pejorative connotation to all other states than the waking condition. Theorists who believed in multiple

realities thought the waking state was really rather inferior and did not deserve to be elevated. Morton Prince, for instance, according to the theories of Ivan Pavlov and Pierre Janet, developed the idea of co-conscious states. He was trying to say that we are aware in the state that we are in at the moment and yet surrounded by other possible conditions which are active and influential, although hidden from view. I bring this up because it points to a rather striking difference between theories of personality in terms of the way they describe the experience of consciousness. Without taking these differences into account, you cannot lump different concepts together and presume we are all talking about the same thing.

LAWRENCE: I agree with what you are saying.

TAYLOR: Doctors tend to protect themselves by strictly adhering to the positivist approach of physiology and not bringing in any philosophy or metaphysics which it appears that you have also wisely done as far as presenting data on anomalous phenomena to that audience.

LAWRENCE: To go back to your first comment, I did look at people who had meditated, lowered their blood pressure, and looked like they were hibernating. One of the things that comes out is that there is some blood pressure, at least the few of the studies I could find where they actually did do some kind of physiological measurement. In this particular case, because this person went into what we call cardiac arrest and into cardiogenic shock, she had an actual catheter in her heart where they could measure how much blood was pumping out and what the oxygen levels were. While that doesn't really measure what is happening in the brain, it certainly is a good indicator in terms of what has happened in general to the body. There was no response. There was no connection between what was happening with her heart and in her circulatory system. She is a phenomenal case in terms of why this woman survived. There is no current good medical explanation for why this woman survived. She should not have been able to survive, and yet she did. Could hyperoxygenation explain this? It doesn't fit the current paradigm.

TAYLOR: Suppose she was denying them information only at the site where the probe entered the body?

LAWRENCE: Well, it could be.

OWENS: I have a question about the documentation you have on the case where her heart stopped for ten minutes?

LAWRENCE: She was in a code for 20 minutes where they called the code and then the team came. Then they hooked her up to the ventilator. She already had a catheter in her heart before that. But it was a 20-minute code and a 10-minute lapse before they came back.

OWENS: So, you have an EKG for ten minutes with no activity?

LAWRENCE: No, that we don't have and I think that is a problem. She wasn't breathing because they were there working with her. They shut all the machines down after they called the code. They were getting her ready because they had called the family. The doctors were writing out the death certificate. What they noticed was all of a sudden she took a breath. Before that she hadn't been breathing spontaneously.

OWENS: Apparently.

LAWRENCE: Apparently. Right.

OWENS: Yes, it is a problem.

LAWRENCE: There's no doubt about it.

OWENS: I have worked very hard to get really good medical documentation of patients who have been presumed dead and it's very difficult to get.

LAWRENCE: It is a problem. I think she had what they call an EMD arrest. During the arrest procedure the documentation is really very good. You want them to keep the EKGs on after they pronounce them, but they are not going to do that because most people don't come back. This was obviously an exception.

OWENS: I totally agree with you about the problems of defining a near-death experience. I think most researchers are well aware of these problems, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and really have wished the term had never been thought of. If there was any way that we could get rid of it, we would. It is just very difficult to get rid of catchy little phrases like that. It is a real problem.

LAWRENCE: I did have one patient that I interviewed in the pilot study who had a near-death experience during a healing session. The healer went to him and he fell back. During this time he had what would be typically called a near-death experience but nobody knew that he was "near death". I mean, he was just passed out like the other people there. But he saw everybody, went through the tunnel, and had

the very typical experience. I think this is not a phenomenon that just happens when people have a cardiac arrest. There are other instances where another name would be useful. I don't know what we would call it but it would certainly be a lot more appropriate and would help us define some of these phenomena better.

BRAUDE: I have a couple of concerns about the way we are talking about hallucinations here. A number of issues come together. First of all, I would like you to say something about how near-death or unconscious hallucinations are different from ostensibly paranormal experiences that might be hallucinatory. You said they were clearly different. I also question, contrary to what Michael said about Karlis Osis's claim, that people having near-death experiences would, if they were hallucinating, see people both dead and alive. I think we have to keep in mind that hallucinations, when they occur, are likely to be intelligently guided. I mean, they are not totally random. They occur within a context of needs and interests. One way to clearly see that is to study people suffering from multiple personality disorder who are virtuoso hallucinators and whose hallucinations quite clearly satisfy various rather obvious needs and interests. I think we need to keep that in mind in studying them in the context of NDEs.

Lastly, in connection with the Grim Reaper, I'm not sure why that's even ostensibly paranormal. It seems to me that it would be unlikely for someone having a near-death experience, say in Bali or Beijing, to be having that particular experience under those sorts of circumstances.

LAWRENCE: I agree with you on that last point. But I also think it would be even unusual in our culture to have a six-year-old have that experience. Maybe not. But that was a young person. The thing that is interesting about the Grim Reaper is that we have tried to find reference sources since it is such a common phenomenon. I'm sure that anyone in this room wouldn't have any trouble conjecturing, or drawing a visual picture of what that is, even though I didn't have a slide on it. Yet, we have had a lot of difficulty trying to find anything written about it.

BRAUDE: You see it in cartoons.

LAWRENCE: Joanne McMahon sent me one cartoon. But it's not common. You would think there would be a book that was called *Grim*

Reaper because it's such a common myth in our society. The only place I found anything written about it was in *Fate* magazine.

BRAUDE: I meant TV cartoons.

LAWRENCE: Maybe that's where this six-year-old saw it. I agree with you. I don't know what that means. I have no idea. It could very well be a cultural phenomenon. In terms of your question about hallucination, I used a very classical description that is more common in medicine. A hallucination is seeing something that is not there. For example, the man who saw blood running down his wall that clearly wasn't there. Now, when the patient who had the operation was watching and telling people what he saw, at least from what we could tell, he was describing what was there. Now, maybe he misinterpreted it but what he saw was really happening. I would say more patients, as a kind of side phenomenon, have what I would call delusions. They think people are out to get them, which is more of a psychological phenomenon. They think they are part of an experiment or they are being held captive by spies, especially if they have foreign people taking care of them. So, you have a whole range of what has been typically called pathological phenomena which is very distinct in terms of the descriptions from these kinds of experiences.

GROSSO: I agree with Steve that hallucinations are probably governed by need. And that is exactly why I'm surprised that there is a consistency in the hallucinating of deceased people. You would think that a person undergoing a crisis of near-death, one of their needs would be to "hallucinate" those who are close to them now—the living. It seems to me that would be a strong need. But in point of fact, you don't get that type of response at all. I do agree with the need factor. I think it is very crucial. But that only strengthens my point. In my opinion that is highly suggestive evidence. I'm just surprised that there is that consistency in hallucinating the deceased as opposed to the living who one would expect one would need to see in a crisis.

OWENS: I just wanted to make a quick comment that there are many cases of near-death experience where there are living relatives.

GROSSO: Are hallucinated?

OWENS: Yes, living and deceased.

GROSSO: As far as I know the literature, there seems to be a preponderance of...

OWENS: The statistics and the frequencies are really hard because of the selection problems. But I've seen enough cases of living relatives appearing in NDEs that I wouldn't make very strong claims about the lack of them.

GROSSO: Oh, they are there but not a preponderance.

OWENS: Not a preponderance, but they are not rare either.

GROSSO: Also, in the Osis study of deathbed visions he found a significant difference between those hallucinations of the living and those of the dead. So, that is the basis of my comment.

OWENS: He did a statistic on deceased versus the living?

GROSSO: Yes, he did.

PALMER: Even assuming that you are right on the data, Michael, you can argue that the other way. It's a myth in our culture that when we die, we go to heaven and we meet our deceased relatives there, particularly if we are very close to them. It might be something we are desiring or looking forward to.

PARANORMAL REPORTS FROM A STUDY OF
NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE AND A
CASE OF AN UNUSUAL NEAR-DEATH VISION

JUSTINE E. OWENS

Much has been written about the near-death experience (NDE) and its possible role in proving immortality. Despite the fact that the vast majority of people who report NDEs also report that the experience is personally convincing of the survival of bodily death, most researchers agree that the typical NDE reports do not constitute convincing evidence for survival. Several possible "paranormal" aspects of the NDE have been noted, however, and these reports require special attention. These cases may provide a unique contribution to the interpretation of the meaning of the NDE.

The purpose of this paper is to review the different kinds of paranormal claims associated with the NDE and to explore the difficulties in investigating these claims. I have grouped cases of NDE in which some paranormal claim is made into four categories, although I do not think that these categories are necessarily *the* four categories of paranormal experience during the NDE. In fact some of the more unique cases do not fit very comfortably within this scheme. However, these groupings do broadly capture the variation I have observed in a large series NDE cases coded for the self-report of paranormal process.

The categories of reports are as follows: (a) knowledge of events occurring out of the range of normal sensory processes, which I will refer to as out-of-body perception (OBP); (b) claimed contact with deceased persons during the NDE; (c) report of telepathic communication or precognition during the NDE and/or an increase of these abilities following the NDE; (d) unusual healing effects associated with the NDE and/or the development of the ability to heal others following the NDE. The first two categories, and sometimes the third, concern the NDE itself, while the fourth category and sometimes the third concern the after-effects of the experience. The first category is explored most fully here, as it is the most frequent of the reports.

The cases I am reporting consist of first person narratives of the experience, questionnaire data concerning the details of the experience,

and information about the life changes reported to follow the NDE. Medical records were obtained for about half of the cases in this sample of 200 cases. The medical conditions of patients reporting NDEs can be reliably rated by independent judges for nearness to death, and the seriousness of medical conditions varies considerably within a group of persons reporting NDEs. The features of the NDE are correlated with the severity of the medical condition, with deeper experiences tending to be reported by persons who were rated to be closer to death (Owens, Stevenson, & Cook, 1990).

Rated nearness to death may be an important factor in evaluating paranormal claims. Sensory processes would be expected to function more normally, in cases where no loss of vital signs occurred and the person is judged to be in a serious medical condition but not near death. In cases where a loss of vital signs occurred, explanations that the person obtained the information through normal sensory processes is less tenable. At this point, however, we simply do not know enough about the state of the brain during near-death conditions. The evaluation of cases such as these clearly depends on a better understanding of mental function during near-death states.

Reports of Out-of-Body Perception (OBP)

The case of Sarah provides a representative example of a report of OBP. Sarah's experience took place in the context of labor and delivery, a medical category comparable in size to cardiac cases, which have received more media attention. (The comparable size of cardiac and labor and delivery cases is based on two samples of self-selected cases.) Sarah's medical records show that she experienced a placental abruption, an abnormal and quick tearing away of the placenta prior to delivery. This resulted in the loss of the baby and hemorrhaging of the mother. Sarah also suffered from untreated toxemia, a dangerous condition in itself, and suffered a cerebral hemorrhage or stroke during her ordeal. Her records reflect a circulatory collapse, requiring cardiac resuscitation, and a lengthy, precarious recovery. Her apparent unconsciousness and lack of responsiveness would lead many to conclude that she was incapable of

cognitive functioning at that time. This is her description of her experience.

"I felt myself swirling away, and next I was at the top of the room. There was a long tunnel, lit brightly with almost blinding white lights. Then I was in the tunnel, narrow at the opening, but wider and wider. I floated in, right to the other end. I hadn't decided to enter, I was just there. I knew complete peace as I was embraced with warmth and love. Beautiful, low voices, chanted, 'Come, Sarah, come. We need you here. We are your guides to heaven, home.' I was ready, and I was going home, where I belonged. Arms beckoned. I saw fingers and wavy white fabric swaying in the breeze of the tunnel. I heard music and I was secure, warm, happy, welcomed and completely at peace. And then...suddenly I was out of the tunnel, at the top of the room. Slowly, I became aware that people in the room were crying. Looking down, I noticed there was a woman on the delivery table who looked a lot like me. Dispassionately, I wondered who it was. I was at the top of the room, just over the operating lights, sort of floating. As I watched the medical team work on that lady a tiny flicker of familiarity surfaced. That lady looked empty. She was dead, I could tell. I knew then, for some reason, that I could make a choice, that there was a choice I needed to make. I chose to go back into the tunnel, hovering back and forth between the two worlds. I still wanted to answer the wonderful, warm, welcoming voices. By then the delivery room was full of people, 20 or 30 of them, all scurrying around. I watched some of them crying, including a man who exactly looked like my father, and slowly I realized they were frantically struggling to save that lady on the table. I remember thinking, 'Forget it. Any one with any intelligence at all can see she's dead.' I saw people's mouths moving, but their words made no sense to me. Yet somehow, I needed to hear and began to struggle to understand their words. Catching one sentence, I heard, 'It's too long. Give it up. There's no chance she'll have anywhere near a normal life.' Someone else asked, 'What about her leg? Is she stitched up?' Up to that point, I was watching with no sense of connection, like looking through a dirty window at a slow motion old movie that had no sound. My mind snapped to alertness like a rubber band striking skin. Something they said felt extremely important to me, but I couldn't grasp yet what it was. 'Her leg? Whose leg?' I had to know. Those were the words that abruptly yanked me back, for I thought they were speaking of my child. Pulled me back from my beautiful tunnel, from the warm and bathing light, and

beckoned me to be alert. To pay attention, away from eternal peace and grace.

From where I was, up at the top of the room, I remember trying to form the thoughts, and then the words, 'Is something wrong with the baby's leg? Why won't it have a normal life?', but no words came out. Years later, thinking back, I do not ever remember seeing a baby in the room. They must have taken her away by then. I had to know. Whose leg? Who wouldn't have a normal life? Who? Even today, 26 years later, I remember how desperate I was to find out, how crucial it felt."

The strong claim in OBP cases is that observing consciousness is physically dissociated from the body and is able to process information in much like normal means, but without being limited to normal sensory channels. Of course, if this is possible, it is a relatively minor step to suppose that consciousness persists after physical death. A weaker claim is that the person is in a state of altered consciousness and has access to information that is normally not available, but this does not involve a physical separation of mind and body. Still weaker is the explanation that these experiences are based partly on available sensory information (auditory and kinesthetic) and partly on general knowledge and the constructive processes of the mind. More dismissive interpretations might say that these recollections were constructions after the fact, that is, after a medical crisis has resolved.

The evaluation of these explanations depends in part on what you believe to be the information processing capacities of the brain during near-death crises. The first three, progressively weaker claims, rest on the assumption that the mind can be quite functional during periods of apparent unconsciousness. Some might find that this assumption itself is inexplicable, even with a paranormal element to it. It certainly defies what many believe to be true of mental processes when the body has been rendered unconscious, or should we say unresponsive. However, many physicians and nurses believe that patients can process auditory information while apparently unconscious due to trauma, or while under general anesthesia, and they caution about the importance of discretion when discussing a patient's condition under those circumstances. While the possibility of information processing during apparent unconsciousness is far from universally acknowledged, there

is some evidence in the medical literature that suggest that an apparently unconscious person can process information (Cheek, 1965; Cherkin & Harroun, 1971; Nastir, 1979; Schnaper, 1990). This is still a relatively uncharted domain, but the ever-growing number of documented NDE reports clearly suggests that persons who are non-responsive, even with a loss of vital signs, should not be presumed unconscious.

Assuming that complex mental functioning can occur during periods of apparent unconsciousness—and I think that this quite extraordinary possibility often gets lost in the rush to get consciousness out of the body—we can move on to evaluating the quality of the information that is reported in cases of OBP. The critical questions here are whether or not the information could have been obtained through auditory or kinesthetic means or if the information could be considered common knowledge, that is, highly probable given the context. If enough evidence were found to indicate information reported in cases of OBP could not have been obtained through these normal channels, then this evidence would lend support to one of the two paranormal hypotheses described above: namely, actual OBP or the somewhat weaker claim that the person is in an altered state with access to information not normally available.

Sarah said that she saw a man that looked like her father and, in fact her father was in the room. Sarah's father was chief of staff at the hospital and was called in when her condition became critical. This is a good example of information that might have been known through normal means, *if* you can accept the idea that people may be able to process information when they appear to be unconscious and unresponsive. Once we accept the possibility of complex mental functioning during near-death states, we must consider the capabilities of an active mind. Sarah's father probably spoke within earshot of Sarah and his voice would be highly recognizable. Even if her father did not speak, Sarah could have inferred his presence given her condition and his position at the hospital.

Sarah's vein had collapsed in her right leg, from an attempt at an emergency IV, and this was a concern of the medical team. The information about something being wrong with Sarah's leg would have been discussed by members of the team. Sarah reported that her

concern about the baby is what snapped her mind to attention. She thought that there was something wrong with the baby's leg, and her need to know more about this, is what she said compelled her to return, away from the warm and comforting peace. Despite Sarah's error in thinking it was her baby's leg being discussed, we are still left with the problem of how Sarah came to know of a difficulty regarding a leg. This would be an example of partially correct information reported in an OBP case.

Sarah's case is a typical example of an NDE in which a person reports obtaining information during the height of a medical crisis. The experiences are quite extraordinary in themselves, but the information obtained is what I would call, for the most part, predictable, or not entirely accurate. As information is quantified in terms of how much uncertainty is resolved, or its unpredictability, the quantity of information reported in cases of this type is often minimal. For example, if a person claimed to observe her doctor tell her husband, during a medical crisis, "We are doing all that we can for her", or something to that effect, this is not particularly convincing because it comes right from the "medical emergency" script. We are all familiar to some degree with the "medical emergency script" and I won't spell out all its common features, characters, and actions, but I can assure you that if a group of people was asked to write out the elements of this script, there would be considerable overlap in the accounts. Cognitive psychologists have conducted just these kinds of studies.

Another report from the medical emergency script would be, "I saw the doctors and nurses scurrying around, doing their best to save me." This statement is typical of an OBP report and even though it does not provide compelling evidence that paranormal perception has taken place, it does not provide evidence that it has not. Medical personnel move more quickly than usual in a medical emergency, and we would expect this to be true in the context of NDE cases as well. The fact that there are predictable, recurring patterns in life should not be held as evidence against the possibility of OBP. We should expect a preponderance of these predictable reports, independent of which the alternative explanations might be true.

However, because most people have this common knowledge and it is as predictable as it is, reports of OBP that reflect this knowledge are

unconvincing of paranormal explanations and can be explained more parsimoniously. If we are willing to accept the possibility that some people, under some conditions, are able to maintain mental function during near-death states, then we can reasonably account for most of the OBP reports with this assumption alone. A mixture of information obtained through auditory and kinesthetic channels, combined with common knowledge of the medical scenario could be used to construct a convincing representation that matches what "actually occurred". The words actually occurred are in quotes because research tells us that if we were to obtain accounts of what transpired during these crises, from the medical personnel, the family, and friends, there would be both an impressive amount of overlap in the *gist* of these accounts, but sometimes substantive differences in the ways ambiguous statements were interpreted and remembered, and which aspects of the situation were more or less salient and elaborated (Owens, Bower, & Black, 1979).

As we move along the continuum of "very predictable" to "highly unlikely" in evaluating the information value of knowledge obtained during an OBE, the evidence for paranormality also increases. It is not until we hear a report that deviates markedly from the script that our interest is sparked. If good corroboration of that unusual piece of information is available—and this availability is an additional matter of luck—then the case becomes more compelling. It logically follows, however, that the more convincing the case, the less likely it would be to occur.

Despite the difficulties inherent in teasing apart complex mental processes, and the improbability of finding cases indicating paranormal process, some have taken up the challenge of investigating cases of OBP. My criticisms of the work I will now describe are intended to further and not diminish efforts in this complex area of study.

Michael Sabom (1982) investigated the reports of NDE survivors of cardiac arrest, who had what he termed "autosopic" experiences. These patients reported observing resuscitation procedures during their own cardiac arrests and Sabom obtained detailed accounts of what they "observed". As a cardiologist, he was particularly capable of evaluating the accuracy of these patients' reports. Sabom was interested in studying the possibility that these patients were making "educated

guesses" or relying on "prior general knowledge" in explaining these accounts. For this reason, he conducted a study in which he asked a comparable group of cardiac patients to imagine a resuscitation procedure and report to him what they "saw". Sabom concludes that the imagination control group was less accurate and less detailed in their reports.

Sabom began his investigations with a definite skepticism about NDEs in general, and was much surprised and changed by his investigations. In evaluating alternative explanations for the accuracy of autoscopic details he says, "My own beliefs in this matter are leaning in the direction [of] the out-of-body hypothesis" (Sabom, 1982, p. 184), the idea that there is an actual physical separation of consciousness and the physical body. Sabom quickly points out that his beliefs are based on the detailed analysis of a small number of cases, that more research is needed, and that other explanations may eventually rule out his "out-of body proposal". He then reaffirms his belief that his observations indicate that NDE "cannot be casually dismissed as some mental fabrication" (p. 184).

Sabom's study focused on the critical issues in evaluating OBP claims and he attempted to systematically rule out alternative explanations for OBP namely: (a) accurate portrayal of the near-death crisis event based solely on prior general knowledge, (b) accurate portrayal of the near-death crisis event based on information supplied by an informed observer, and (c) accurate portrayal of the near-death crisis event based on visual and verbal perceptions made during a semi-conscious state.

Before ruling out these alternative explanations, I think it is important to consider the synthesizing processes of the mind and the concept that we normally integrate information from multiple sources in creating a coherent and seamless perceptual flow. The above alternatives need not be considered as independent explanations, as in "accurate portrayal of the near-death crisis event *based solely on* prior general knowledge". Imaging information obtained through other senses is a routine cognitive process, especially for some people.

Sabom did not take into account that persons reporting NDEs are reported to score higher on measures of Mental Absorption (Council &

Greyson, 1985; Twemlow & Gabbard, 1984-1985). According to Tellegen, the author of the Mental Absorption Scale (Tellegen 1982),

Mental Absorption is interpreted as a disposition for having episodes of "total" attention that fully engage one's representational (i.e., perceptual, enactive, imaginative and ideational) resources. This kind of attentional functioning is believed to result in a heightened sense of the reality of the attentional object, imperviousness to distracting events and an altered sense of reality in general, including an empathically altered sense of self. (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974, p. 268)

For a better comparison, Sabom's imaginative controls might have been matched on levels of Mental Absorption. In addition, some visualization enhancement procedure or hypnosis for the imaginative controls would have provided a stronger test. Cardiac patients might not have been particularly eager to imagine resuscitation procedures.

The predominant error made by the imagination control subjects was the mention of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, an inferior method not used in hospital procedures. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is apparently a salient feature of the "resuscitation script" as the predominance of this error indicates. It seems plausible to conjecture, however, that the mouth-to-mouth resuscitation feature would have been eliminated during the use of artificial respiration techniques. The patients who were actually resuscitated would have this additional sensory information with which to modify their imagery of what was taking place.

Further examination of OBP cases further illustrates the possibility of the kind of interplay of prior knowledge and constructive visual processes that I am proposing. However, in considering the role of these mental processes in cases of OBP, I am not suggesting a casual dismissal of them as some "mental fabrication" or "just the imagination". Before examining more cases of OBP, I wish to counter this position at the outset.

The fact is that we do not understand what "taking place in the imagination" means. There is a tendency to act as if saying the NDE is just mental fabrication constitutes an explanation, but our current state of knowledge about mental processes does not really justify this.

Advances in cognitive science and mind-body medicine suggest that these attitudes are clearly in need of revisioning. Taking a dismissive position toward perhaps the most complex natural process that we have identified, and that centuries of thoughtful probing has hardly touched, seems unscientific and possibly defensive. I think that this attitude expresses a cultural bias that is slowly in the process of changing.

The status of mental contents is still an unresolved philosophical question. The visual system is engaged in visual perception as well as the visual imagination and it is simplistic to think that one is real and the other is not. The position that one should simply dismiss mental contents as "unreal" if they are not direct representations of a sensory stimulus is hardly tenable. There is no avoiding the fact that perception is inextricably linked with the information processing history—or memory—of the perceiver.

Regardless which explanation for OBP is favored, these reports represent remarkable mental events. OBP reports very often contain testimonials regarding the reality and vividness of these experiences. Unlike most hallucinations, the conviction in the realness of what they "saw" does not diminish over time.

A representative description of the vividness of the imagery and memory for these experiences is given by Lauren who fell into the propeller of a motor boat:

"I vividly remember looking down on my body from the ceiling, watching everyone running around getting towels to wrap around my bleeding shoulder, but before that I remember looking down and seeing my shoulder cut open and the flesh inside hanging out. I could describe the room to you, even now, three years later. Everyone stated that I absolutely never opened my eyes. They said that I was totally unconscious the entire time."

The strength and consistency of such testimonials address the issue of "realness" and indicate that these reports should be respected, even if they are "just" mental productions. I have tried to caution against taking a dismissive attitude toward mental processes, but this is a position that will fade slowly. In the meantime, we must still address the sources of the information in these reports if we are to investigate the possible involvement of a paranormal process.

Sabom reports a cardiac resuscitation case who described a "shot in the groin". "It appeared to me that they were putting a shot in there" (p. 107). In fact, the medical team drew blood from the man's femoral artery for a blood gas determination. Sabom suggests that this error further supports actual OBP, as the mistake could easily have been made from visual OBP, at a distance. If the man had received this information from overhearing medical personnel, his statements would probably have been more accurate. Sabom does not mention the possibility of kinesthetically sensing this procedure and possibly hearing some verbal reference to a needle, and then representing this visually. We should consider the possibility as well, that Sarah's knowledge that something wrong was with a leg came partially from her kinesthetic awareness of a medical procedure, although her conviction that it was her baby's leg that was in danger complicates this picture.

Sabom says his most striking example of visual perception, outside the visual field of the patient came from a man who reported seeing three of his relatives, his wife, his eldest daughter, and eldest son, in the hospital corridor at the time of his cardiac arrest. He reported that they were talking to a doctor. According to the family's report, they had arrived unexpectedly and the father could not possibly have seen them because of the distance between them and the fact that his head was pointing in the other direction. The father had no reason to expect to see his family that night as he was scheduled to be discharged the following morning. The visit was intended to be a surprise.

This report is similar to a case in my study where a woman named Janet told her husband that she heard the doctor say, "in five more minutes, she would have been gone." The husband did not take Janet's report seriously until she went on to say that she saw her daughter and son-in-law talking to a policeman outside the emergency room. He found this more convincing, but asked her not to discuss it anymore because people would think she was crazy. Incidentally, this last comment represents another consistent aspect of NDE reports—the fear of what other people would think—which may lead to an under-reporting of convincing cases.

Another suggestive case is that of Thomas who reports that he was out of his body looking down on his own brain surgery.

"I was out of my body looking down at my head. I did not understand what was happening to me but I remember a metal object reflecting much light. Subsequently I learned I was looking at the titanium clip used to clip my artery."

Thomas reported to me that he discussed this experience with his surgeon who appeared surprised at the accuracy of his description. Thomas's medical record is one of the few I have seen which contains a mention of his experience.

"Mr. B. describes himself as having been dominating and hard driving prior to his aneurysm. Around the time of his surgery, he had an out-of-body experience which profoundly affected his life goals and conduct. He perceives himself now as more mellow, reflective, religious, and concerned about the welfare of others."

This statement does not mention Mr. B.'s in-depth life review and encounter with Christ which may have contributed to his life changes. In any event, long-lasting life changes are often reported following NDEs and are another important indication that these experiences should not be treated in a dismissive way.

After reviewing hundreds of NDE cases for evidence of paranormal processes, I have concluded that nature rarely provides us with the ideal experiment. That people may be reluctant to report these cases to an investigator only makes the situation more problematic. The scarcity of convincing cases has led some people to propose experiments designed to improve on these circumstances. In order to expose the subject to unlikely information, one could provide visual targets. Or as I have jokingly suggested, one could have information in a room away from the emergency, with signs posted, directing the way: "Out of your body? Please go to room 167." Some have even attempted to carry out experiments exploring the possibility of out-of-body perception, but the practical aspects of conducting such research in a medical setting, make these kinds of studies very difficult.

The final case of reported OBP, the case of Helene, is unusual in a number of ways. I learned of this case very soon after it occurred. Corroborating witnesses were available to be interviewed and

documentation, in the form of police records and medical records, was available. The information that was reported from the NDE was both a highly specific and unlikely occurrence.

Helene, an elderly woman suffering from lung cancer, was in an ICU being treated for an adverse reaction to penicillin. Her priest and her relatives were summoned in the middle of the night. During this vigil, she was in and out of consciousness, and she was able to tell her priest and her two sons of her remarkable near-death experience (NDE).

Helene ascended a marble staircase, with harps playing and flowers of unearthly colors, with a unusually sweet scent. Four black doves flew out and four black horsemen came and shot them down, one at a time. As each black dove fell and was thrown to the side, a white dove came out, each with a band of pearls and glittering diamonds in the tail. Four black doves and four white ones. Helene continued to ascend the steps and saw four rainbows. She saw her sister, who was still living and said goodbye. She continued to climb the staircase effortlessly; there was "no pull" resisting her steps. When she reached the fourth rainbow she knew that she must turn back. She then "heard a phone ring"—no phone actually rang in the room—and knew there was a message for her family. She found herself viewing a vehicular accident involving a car and a truck, occurring at an intersection. It was dark and pouring rain. The scene "unravelled like a picture". She could see that there were two young men in the car and one was thrown out of the vehicle and landed in a muddy ditch. She knew that a cousin of her grandchildren, who lived in South Carolina, had been killed. The next day her grandchildren came to see her and she asked them, "Which one of your cousins has been killed?" Her grandson replied, "There's nothing wrong in our family." The grandmother answered with certainty, "Yes, there is, your cousin has been killed." The grandchildren soon learned that their cousin had, in fact, been killed in the night, two states away. The grandmother's medical crisis, as indicated on her medical record, and the fatal accident, according to the police report, coincide in time.

Helene told me that when her priest learned of the accident, he said to her that she must have gone to South Carolina that night. (He is clearly an unusual priest!) Helene seemed somewhat disturbed by his

statement and confided in me that she wondered about him for saying it. Helene has had psychic experiences since she was a child and it was my sense that she believed that this was a strong example of her psychic abilities, perhaps enhanced by her NDE, but that her consciousness had not physically separated from her body.

Physical separation of mind and body is the more extreme of the paranormal explanations, as indicated earlier. The cases that I have studied do not suggest, to me, that this position is supported. Cases such as Helene, however, do support the idea that some paranormal process of obtaining information during an NDE may be involved in some of these cases. I think it is important to study the previous experiences of persons reporting unusual cases, to further understand the role of prior psychic abilities.

Claims of Contact with Deceased Persons

The second category of paranormal claims is the reported encounter with deceased relatives. Many persons come away from the NDE with the conviction they have actually encountered their deceased parents, grandparents, other relatives, or friends. Conversations with these figures most often concern the issue of returning to life and so do not typically contain information with potential for supporting the claim of paranormality. I mention encounters with deceased relatives because there is the possibility of obtaining such information. The deceased relative might convey something highly informative, which only that individual knew, for example, the location of a long-lost valuable object or document. This possibility has been discussed elsewhere with respect to encounters with deceased persons in dreams, apparitions, and NDEs (Myers, 1889-1890; Owens, 1991).

Reports of Psi During or Following the Near-Death Experience

The third category of paranormal claims is the report of telepathic communication or precognition during the NDE and/or an increase of these abilities following the NDE (Ring, 1984). For example, Thomas,

who reported seeing the titanium clip used during his brain surgery also reported a vision of his church congregation:

"Then I saw several people sitting in a church. And I saw beautiful prayer waves like heat waves rising from a hot asphalt road in the summer coming at me like sound waves from these people. I later learned they had prayed a prayer for me at a Sunday service."

Another person, Monica, reported to me that she saw a vision of her daughter with a black baby (her daughter was white) and her daughter did later have a black child.

Cases which somewhat fit this category are reports that others knew of what was happening to them while it was happening, or felt compelled to go to their assistance at the time of the crisis. For example, a woman reported that she fell off a sailboat and nearly drowned. She was enveloped by a bright light and her husband pulled her to the surface. She was amazed by the presence of her mother when they arrived back at the boat dock. In her words:

"My mother was driving down the street in my home town, 17 miles away and had what she described as a 'sinking feeling'. She then felt 'drawn' to turn around the drive to the lake. She did not know I was going sailing that day or where I was at all. We had rented the sailboat from one of my girlfriend's co-workers and it was kept at a lake at a private home. My mother did not even know the name of the co-worker or where the family's house was located. She drove directly to the lake and drove without error to the house where the sailboat was kept. She didn't know why, she just followed her instincts. As we docked, I stepped onto the dock and looked up and there was my mother."

Some persons report experiences which fit more than one of the categories. The following is a case in which encounters with deceased relatives are described and an increase in psychic abilities are reported as an after-effect. As a side note, Vernon Neppe, who is a neurologist at the University of Washington and who has studied psychic abilities and temporal lobe symptoms, reported to me that the smelling of sweet floral essences with no flowers in sensory range, is a hallmark of a person with psychic abilities. Although smelling sweet smells is an

infrequent feature of the NDE, I *have* found it to be associated with reports of increased or emergent psi abilities following the NDE. The women who reported the following experience reported smelling an unusual sweet essence during her NDE.

"Suddenly there was darkness then a tunnel that was brilliant white light, on the 'sides' of this tunnel were sparks of blue light, all I remember thinking was 'how beautiful this is'. Before I knew it I saw white light and figures of people, my mother greeted me (she had died a few years earlier) it was then I thought 'I must be dead' but I was happy—very happy to see her, she had her grey hair in braids over her head as she'd always worn it. With her were 'the Grandmothers' two other elderly wise women, one with something in her hand, I don't remember what, one wise one was Native American. All were smiling at me and I felt such a peace, such love, such complete contentment. I could see, hear, feel yet I don't remember that I had a body—don't feel I did but I was there. I could smell a slight scent of flowers. We talked by telepathy. Mom said, 'We are so very happy to see you, we need to decide whether you stay here or return to your body.' I said, 'I've been in so much pain, physically and emotionally I really don't want to return.' My mother and the Grandmothers said, 'You are here to know you *are* loved and watched over, we know you are going through difficult times now but your future will be better we strongly advise you to return to your body. You have things to do yet in your life.' The NDE has greatly changed my life. I no longer fear death. My intuition and ESP has increased."

Reports of Unusual Healing or Healing Abilities after the NDE

Marilyn is a rather unique case, with elements of categories two, three, and four but that really goes beyond all of these. During her medical emergency, a woman reported that her priest was contacted, but no family member was available. Afterwards her priest mentioned to her that he was glad that at least her father had been able to be come for a short while. I will continue the description in her own words:

"I asked him what my father looked like and he described him as older, with thick white, wavy hair. He was dressed in dark green shirt and pants

(which my father always wore working in the garden) and said he walked hunched over (my father had emphysema). I said it couldn't have been my father. He became irritated with me and told me the man said, 'Well, I am Mary Ann's father but can't stay, I have to leave.' I then told the priest my father had died two years previously. To that, he just said, 'Oh.' I had no doubt that my father was there, since I loved him extremely and we had a very good, loving family and just know that wouldn't be out of line."

Marilyn also reported an increased ability to heal herself of various ailments. She thinks she also has the ability to heal others, but said she lacks the confidence to try. She would not know how to handle a person lacking in faith, which she believes is essential for spiritual healing. She provided a list of the ways her health has improved.

"I have self-healed many things on myself such as: 1. I damaged my knees in an accident and was told I would never ride a bike again. I now ride all the time. 2. I had chronic painful elbow from same accident. I am never bothered by it anymore. 3. I had an ugly wart on my nose which bled often. It is gone. 4. I had a chronic stiff neck and sometimes couldn't turn my head from side to side. My neck is now fine. 5. I had a bone spur in foot and had three removed previously. I refused to go through that again so I got rid of it. 6. I had clogged salivary glands under tongue which caused swelling and pain in glands under ear, now gone forever. 7. My headaches are gone when they just get started. 8. My hair loss - a lot! - stopped. 9. Many years ago, I had viral pneumonia and have a tendency of recurrence. I regularly clear my lungs and chest area while meditating."

Jonathan also represents a claim of unusual healing associated with the NDE. Jonathan was diagnosed with pancreatic and liver cancer prior to his NDE. Recovering from surgery, he had an out-of-body experience which he believes has changed him irrevocably. Part of this change is that he is now nearly four years in complete remission from his cancer.

Conclusion

Much further research needs to be done before any firm conclusions in this area can be drawn. A major difficulty in pursuing this line of investigation is that NDE cases strongly suggestive of paranormal process are quite rare. It would seem that the same factors which make a case convincing with respect to the paranormal would also work to make these cases unusual. Obtaining highly improbable information during an NDE both contributes to the strength of the evidence and makes it unlikely to occur.

Due to the natural scarcity of cases that are strongly convincing of a paranormal element, progress in this area may require either studying very large numbers of cases or providing appropriate targets in medical environments where NDEs are likely to occur. Alternatively, a multi-factorial approach may be a more feasible line of investigation. Studying the relationship of paranormal reports to the medical and psychological factors known to be significant in NDEs may provide greater insight into the nature of these reports. This approach has the important advantage of integrating these studies within the larger body of medical and psychological research.

Working to change the cultural climate surrounding these kinds of reports may also further this research. People might feel more willing to report unusual NDEs in a society which values these kinds of experiences. The funding needed to carry out such studies is more likely to become available if an attitude of openness toward such cases was to prevail.

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DISCUSSION

TAYLOR: I would like to see this phenomenon put in more of a context with regard to what else is going on in other disciplines that might somehow have some relation to this.

OWENS: I didn't have time to go into that because I ran out of time.

TAYLOR: I have what may be a more appropriate question for the General Discussion but I am associating something you said that I thought was very interesting. I would like to see the phenomena you have described considered in the context of what we know about physiology across the life span of the individual. In other words, I cannot conceive that we could penetrate much further into any significant understanding of this unless we understood the relation of the death experience to, for example, sexual reproduction. I mean, if you really look at the global picture of human functioning in a scientific way, you see that we are staying right there at the end of death collecting these experiences. And yet, what do they mean with regard to the overall experience of the organism itself? It seems to me it is quite significant with regard to the whole problem of consciousness, to look at the biological grounding of this phenomenon. At the same time the other portion of what you are suggesting to me hints at the obvious ethnographic comparisons of people in different cultures at the moment of death. I'm particularly struck by the fact that civilized Western culture is unique, in that almost every other culture in the world condones communication with the dead. For us to say, "Oh, you know, we found one subject out of 400,000 who saw a dead relative," seems hardly significant. If you go into China, Bali, or any culture that practices ancestor worship, communication with the dead is commonplace. Just because we do not have scientific evidence or we only have one or two cases, we presume that our little discoveries are suggestive of something. It appears to me that your case at the end is quite suggestive. Most people in the world communicate with the dead and our Western view is really the exception rather than the rule. Isn't that also partly based on the problems of scientific epistemology? We have created a worldview which has eliminated that whole iconographic pantheon from our comprehension of human experience.

OWENS: You said, "The case at the end." I'm not sure which one you are talking about.

TAYLOR: The very last comment you made was about the cultural embedding of our understanding of this phenomenon. It seems to me that it is important to consider that, but it is quite a large agenda from the standpoint of our ancestral birth lines, for instance. I am half-Irish and half-Anglo-Saxon. Obviously, if I go back far enough beyond the

scientific influence on the culture that created my parents and their parents, I will discover basic mythic rituals and understandings that were a part of my genetic blood line when this iconography did exist. It has been winnowed out of our collective psyche as far as the Western analytic tradition is concerned. And here we are, trying to bring it back in.

OWENS: One of my favorite topics is the role of cultural contexts in interpreting the meaning of NDEs and cross-cultural studies. I talked more about the paranormal because of this conference. But I agree with you that the larger contexts of NDEs are probably quite important in understanding them.

TAYLOR: I was not saying you should include this in your paper. I was saying that in the general understanding of this phenomenon, we are trying to advocate knowledge of it between the disciplines. It seems to me that there is a lot more information that could be brought to bear on the discussion.

OWENS: When you talk about the developmental aspect, I have been writing some proposals in those terms partly because I've been advised by several federal officials that the Institute on Aging would be the best place to get funding for this. Apparently, in this culture if you're old it's okay to be spiritual.

TAYLOR: I'm thinking of other cases, as well. Phantom limb phenomena, for instance, is a part of the physiological literature, but it is really anomalous.

OWENS: The other thing I hesitate to mention, but I'll just throw it out, is some casual anecdotal conversations that some people report marital difficulties after these experiences. When you talk about sex, they report a very different sense of being in the world. I don't have any statistics on the divorce rate; the divorce rate is so high anyway. But it's something to think about. Certainly, I have anecdotal cases of people saying, "It's just not the same."

LAWRENCE: I was just going to support what you said, although I don't have anything about their sexual practices afterwards. But I know that the transformations that have happened to these people and how they relate or don't relate to the family members creates a very large gap in the relationships. The same person I talked about yesterday who wanted to give away his coat to the fellow on the street, talked to

me about his wife referring to the support groups for people who have had near-death experiences as the "spook groups". She really has no idea of what he's been through, how he feels, and why he's doing the things that he's doing. I think this is not an unusual occurrence. Family discord after this is very common even though their intent is to be more loving and more spiritual. The spouses say, "It's not the same person I married" which is true. It does create, I think, a lot of problems.

OWENS: Yes. I have seen very much of that. One case I didn't report was a wife who told her husband about what she had observed in this medical emergency situation, something that had come right from the script. Then she said she saw her daughter and her son-in-law talking to a policeman outside. That had actually occurred. It really shook up the husband and he said, "Well, don't you tell anybody that because they'll think you're crazy." I hear those reports so often. They're afraid to tell. They've been told not to tell. There's one case even more extreme than that at the University of Virginia. I didn't investigate this case; Emily Cook went out to interview the wife because she had reported a near-death experience. The husband wasn't scheduled to be there but he happened to be home at the time. It turned out that he had had one as well, but they were both afraid to tell each other. It's the fear of what people would think. It's so strong. I can't tell you how strong it is. It's something that's just not talked about much. These people live in fear. It's like being in the closet for years with these experiences. They're so strong, and they're so powerful. They're so afraid to talk about them, which I've said is another proof of their psychological health or at least getting a grasp on what's going on. They are very much aware of what the culture thinks. They're definitely in touch with "reality".

TAYLOR: What you're implying is that there would be cases where people might give these descriptions and then be psychiatrically medicated for them.

OWENS: Oh, yes. There are definitely stories about people being medicated.

TAYLOR: Once they make a description of their true experience, the physician makes a decision that, "Well, this person has got paranoid hallucinations. And we have drugs for that, too."

OWENS: It has happened. That is what's not funny about it. It really has happened to these people.

LAWRENCE: I have one woman that I talked to who had a near-death experience when she was having her baby. When she came home, she had as Justine has said, other kinds of psychic phenomena. She had an out-of-body experience where she was standing at the door watching herself feed the baby. It really scared her. She didn't know what was going on. To have that experience, besides having the near-death experience, she was just petrified. So, she went to see a psychiatrist. He said, "You know, don't worry about it, honey, take this Valium, and you'll be all set." A very typical approach is, "This will go away. It's just your mind. Just take the sedative or the tranquilizer, and you'll be fine." That is a lot of what they get from the medical profession and other family members. People don't want to be labeled as "crazy" and this has always been in the realm of "crazy" behavior.

OWENS: It's very consistent advice that people get. "Just put it out of your mind. Forget about it. It will go away." I've gotten this report so many times. But these experiences are very vivid, and they have an unusual persistence in memory, which I think is another feature of the experience. The advice just doesn't work. They don't go away. That is a hallmark of the experience—they don't go away. So, it's a real problem to be faced with this strong advice, and it just doesn't work. Medical professionals saying, "Don't think about it. It'll go away." It doesn't go away.

GROSSO: In listening to this, I'm surprised in the sense that popular culture, which has featured the near-death experience in dozens of movies and talk shows and popular books, hasn't had any impact. I would think that by now it would become almost passé to have a near-death experience and that more and more people would be prepared to accept these experiences as real. I'm surprised at the level of resistance that persists.

TAYLOR: The popular folk culture has an influence at the level of the clinic. It will not have much influence at the level of scientific epistemology where problems are formulated and grant money is dispensed for major research.

GROSSO: I understand that but what I'm hearing is that even in the popular culture—the family, the priest, the husband, the wife, and so forth—that there is a general pervasive resistance. I'm just a bit astonished at that.

OWENS: Well, I've spent a good deal of my life going back and forth between worlds where these things are taken for granted and worlds where they absolutely are not acknowledged. These are big worlds and they exist; both of them.

LAWRENCE: Michael, to respond to you, I think it is now. If you were to interview people now to describe a near-death experience it wouldn't be as threatening psychologically. People would be more open to that. I don't think it's the case with other kinds of phenomena like near-death visits, having people in their room who had died, or the Grim Reaper. Those people say, "Hey, I don't know whether I'm losing it or not. What is this that I'm seeing here?" I think that in some ways there is probably more acceptance of the near-death experience currently. But in some of these cases, you have people who are talking to you about experiences that they had a number of years ago because at that point in time they didn't want to talk about it. Now they are coming to the forefront because it is more acceptable. It is still kind of touchy, I think, for a lot of people.

MORNING GENERAL DISCUSSION DAY TWO

ROLL: I have a couple of factual questions and a general observation. The general observation has already been alluded to, and that is what we call NDEs, perhaps are not caused or are not due to physical stress but may be due to mental stress and may occur in any situation in which there is extreme mental stress. The mental stress can be produced artificially, as in very ardent Zen meditation, or it can be the result of life circumstances where a person is plunged into a desperate depression. Suddenly, an opening is produced and a full near-death type experience may unfold. We don't usually talk to people like that. They are the people who come up after meetings and say, "Well, I had a near-death experience, but I wasn't dying." Perhaps the two speakers could respond to that. The second thing we already discussed yesterday, and that is where somebody else who is close to the near-dier, the person who is experiencing a trauma, may have transcending near-death type experiences. Part of that may be the reunion phenomenon that Raymond Moody is now studying experimentally where people appear to their loved ones after death through scrying.

Electronic equipment was mentioned. I don't know whether it was sensitivity to electronic equipment or whether electronic equipment somehow or other was sensitive to the person who had had a near-death experience. That's the sort of information I would like. With regard to telepathic communions or community with a deceased, during the near-death experience, what is the experience like apart from the veridical aspects of it? Is the experience telepathic union, the sense of union, primarily with the dead, with the living, or with both?

LAWRENCE: Let me see if I can respond. When patients have near-death experiences (and I'm now using the term NDE as the typical: feeling euphoric, wonderful, peace, going out of the body, through the tunnel, etc.) we know and can predict that a certain percentage of patients who come close to death will have that experience. That is fairly consistent. Now, that may not be the only situation that that does happen but for sure it does happen to a certain degree with people who come close to death.

Now, it is my own belief, though I haven't seen this any place, that if you have a situation where there is a physiological compromise it could possibly lead to a near-death experience, for example, OB patients who drop their blood pressure because of blood loss. They don't call it cardiac arrest. In other words, their heart doesn't stop. They don't have to be put on a ventilator. But the patient may become unconscious. So, if you have a situation where you have a highly emotionally charged event like having a baby and a compromised physiological state, possibly that could also lead to a near-death experience. For example, the healing session that I talked about might be another set of circumstances that could induce this classic description of the near-death experience, although I'm sure that that's not limited. But the thing about it is we can predict with a certain number of patients who have come close to death, that a certain number of them will have near-death experiences.

ROLL: I had a man come to me and describe a full near-death experience. The situation that seemed to trigger it was that he lost his job as a result of some wrong-doing. He was divorced; he lost his family; he lost everything. He was reduced to nothing in his own eyes and was close to suicide. Nothing was physically wrong with him but out of that despair followed a near-death experience. I've spoken to some other people who felt they weren't being taken seriously because they weren't near death. They would communicate with people like Bruce Greyson, but their experiences didn't belong anywhere. So, what about that?

OWENS: To fully answer your question would take some time, but I will do the best that I can. I'm aware of the classification problem. I tend to take people in that are not taken in by the International Association of Near-Death Studies (IANDS). I've had several orphans that came to me. I didn't know what else to do, really. I've studied somewhere between 500 and 600 self-reported cases of near-death experience. It became clear that some cases didn't fit the NDE prototype. Finally I started putting them into piles and as the piles got bigger, I gave it a label. A rather large pile is what I call stress, Emotional Distress Exhaustion cases. That's one of the larger groups of these anomalous kinds of cases. The basic answer to your question is, there's a tremendous amount of diversity in the situations where

these kinds of experiences occur. I have a rather lengthy classification scheme that takes this diversity into account.

ROLL: My feeling and my guess is that the umbrella concept is stress—psychological stress rather than physical stress.

LAWRENCE: Not always.

ROLL: In other words, when you are near death most people would feel stressed.

OWENS: That is true. I think it's an important factor. I take a multifactorial approach to the study of these phenomenon. One of the factors that I believe is very important in accounting for the depth of the experience is the perceived threat of death. Another factor is the actual severity of the medical condition. I think those are independent factors. Neither one of them needs to be present in order to have these experiences. Another factor that I think is important is prior experience with altered states of consciousness.

ROLL: In the old near-death literature, the old parapsychology literature, and the old psychiatric literature a lot of these experiences happened during falls from bridges and mountains where there was nothing physically wrong with the person.

OWENS: Yes, the near-miss accidents. That's another very problematic case that often gets ignored. I've worked pretty intensively with a labor and delivery nurse who's had a lot of experience. She thinks the term "normal delivery" is an oxymoron, which I think is probably true. Another problem that hasn't been brought up here is the class of people that have been excluded from the classification with IANDS. These people remember the experiences a long time after the crisis, or even don't have memory of these experiences at all. So, they feel like something happened during the crisis, but they have an amnesia for it and then later recover this memory. That's a very problematic situation. Another case that was very difficult to classify was a heart transplant patient who had a near-death experience in which God told her that she should have the transplant. She was resistant to having this. She absolutely refused to have it. She came back to consciousness long enough to tell her daughter of the experience. The transplant went through but possibly because of the drugs that they use for these patients as sedatives, she has total amnesia for this experience. Did she have one?

ROLL: I see.

PALMER: Something just occurred to me in relation to this notion that sometimes people have near-death experiences when they're not near death, particularly regarding the out-of-body component. A number of years ago I developed a theory of out-of-body experiences which contains an idea that is implicit in some other theories like Susan Blackmore's, namely, that the experience is precipitated by a kind of subconscious threat to the body concept. In other words, we feel that we are losing our sense of body and also our sense of self. The out-of-body experience is an attempt to bring these back symbolically, in a different way. When you're losing your sense of body and your sense of self, it's something like death. Of course, all this is at an unconscious level, so, it wouldn't necessarily show up in a report of stress. But, it could explain why you get some death-related themes in conjunction with some of these experiences.

LAWRENCE: I think the problem is the methodological question: Why doesn't everybody, then, who is faced with those same types of situations have those kinds of experiences? What is it, then, about this particular individual? You've got hundreds of people who have this, yet not everybody reports the phenomenon. I think that's a key problem. I would like to pick up on something Justine said. I also had a couple of cases with patients who immediately after the experience reported to a family member that they had had either an out-of-body experience or a near-death experience and then a couple of weeks later didn't remember the experience, nor did they remember even telling the significant other about the experience. So, memory is a factor. Some of it has to do with the drugs that they are taking, which promote amnesia for a lot of the events. That's another complicating factor.

EDGE: There are two other questions that Bill had, one was on the electronic equipment, and the other was on telepathy.

ROLL: Particularly reports of telepathy primarily with living persons or with dead persons.

OWENS: There's a broad range and a real mixture. It's the same response I have to the simple classification. I've heard it all.

ROLL: So, both are there.

OWENS: Yes.

LAWRENCE: I think the thing that is interesting for me is when they report these experiences, the visualization is similar to when they're in their body. Whatever is going on, the visual system seems to be the same with the exception that it's more intense, particularly as they go deeper in the experience. If they see flowers or scenes they describe them as very, very vivid. So, the senses are enhanced except for hearing. Hearing, given our typical, normal senses, changes and people don't report hearing as they usually do. They report telepathic information. I gave one presentation to a lay audience. I was talking about what people see and hear. A woman raised her hand and said, "I'm deaf. And when I had this near-death experience, the information came into my head." This was obviously a very new experience for her to get information this way.

ROLL: What about music?

LAWRENCE: Yes, they will hear music. But, again, the hearing has changed in terms of what they describe as their sense experience.

ROLL: They won't talk. They'll telepathize. But they may experience something like music. Is that true incidentally? There seem to be some reports but I don't know how common they are.

OWENS: It really varies quite a lot. There is definitely a very strong claim of this telepathic communication where they will verbalize what was told to them. Then they'll quickly say, "But I didn't really hear it. I just knew it." They'll go on and on about it. But then there are cases where they report hearing sounds, definite sounds: music, clanging sounds, whooshing sounds, definite auditory-like sensations.

ROLL: Electronic? Did we get to that? That's interesting because it might be PK.

OWENS: I think these people should be tested (I'll just talk briefly about that) because the reports that I get are such a mixed bag. Some of it, I have to say, is kind of silly or hard to believe, but I'm not trying to at all discount all the claims. I think some electronic interaction might really be going on. However, they sometimes seem overly interpretive of what's happening to them and illogical about these purported interactions with electronic and physical equipment. You get a whole morass of reporting. It's really difficult to sort it out. But I think that there is enough consistency that these people should be tested.

ROLL: Madelaine, did you mention that, also?

LAWRENCE: Yes. I just want to mention one other aspect of this which I haven't checked out, but I think it might be worth pursuing. I would be interested to know what is already known about people who have other kinds of paranormal experiences. I agree with what Justine says, that the people will often report that clocks don't work when they're around them and report that they affect the electronic equipment so that the electronic equipment doesn't work as well. One of the nurses in the coronary care unit says that when she has a patient, who is on a lot of pieces of equipment—ventilators, tubes, and electronic equipment—the EKG readings have blips and a straight line as part of that whole configuration. There is what she calls a "fuzzy baseline". It usually means that there is so much electronic equipment that the monitor is picking it up. She swears that patients who have had a near-death experience, even if they don't have all this electronic equipment on them, will have that same kind of fuzzy baseline. It was the same kind of reading that they would get with a lot of electronic equipment. She showed me a couple of strips. Nobody has systematically checked this out. But I, like Justine, believe that it's worth pursuing, because there are lots of reports of this. There seems to be something that happens that can be picked up based on electronic equipment.

OWENS: That needs to be done carefully. I've done a lot of physiological recordings and fuzzy baselines are a part of life. With 60 cycle interference you need to be very careful when making any claim about electronic effects. The anecdotal reports are numerous.

BRAUDE: I was first struck by Bill Roll's comment about the possibility of near-death experiences occurring when there is no real threat of physical death. It reminded me that in general (and this is well known in the case of dissociative disorders) that what counts as trauma of the sort that would initiate a dissociative disorder varies quite wildly and idiosyncratically between individuals. So, it could be something that practically everyone would find traumatic, or it could be rather more specific. I suppose a philosophy student could be traumatized by reading Rudolf Carnap. Here I just want to ask for a point of information. I guess I'm just flaunting my ignorance. It makes me wonder whether there are some suggestive parallels between the studies of near-death experiences and what we know about dissociative

disorders. For example, children tend to dissociate differently than adults. That's why adults seldom develop multiple personality. We also know that people suffering from dissociative disorders are highly hypnotizable. I would wonder whether any studies have shown whether those who experience NDEs are likewise highly hypnotizable?

OWENS: Studies have shown that people who experience NDEs score higher on measures of mental absorption, which is correlated with hypnotizability. There are a number of interrelated scales. That's a consistent finding. Four studies have shown that. Back to the physical sensitivity, Phyllis Atwater, who has written books about the after-effects of a near-death experience and talks a lot about the brain changes, has done a lot of media work, gone into television studios, and claims to have destroyed thousands of dollars worth of equipment because of these problems. She has very strong claims and would be a good subject to be tested. There are a number of people who make these really rather strong claims.

BRAUDE: With your equipment?

OWENS: No, not my equipment.

ROLL: Ken Ring apparently has found that people who report near-death experiences and also people who report alien encounters, have had stressful childhoods. Do you have any comment about that?

OWENS: I take it seriously enough to have attempted a replication of his work with several hundred persons, using both his scales. His studies have been criticized because of the use of nonstandard psychological measures. So, I'm replicating his work, both with his measures and with standard psychological measures. I'm in the process of entering this data into a computer.

ROLL: Oh, good.

LAWRENCE: I think one of the methodological issues that comes up with this kind of research is that you can give patients DES scales or mental absorption scales, but you give them after the fact. So, you don't know whether this was the pre-condition that resulted in the NDE or the NDE then changed their scores. Obviously, the interest in near-death experiences has come about as far as the health care field is concerned, because of the new resuscitation procedures. We can now resuscitate patients, bring patients back, that historically would have died. But now we also have another group of patients that are going to

lend themselves very nicely to this kind of research in that we have patients that come in for treatment. We put in implantable defibrillators, for example. One of the things, given that particular patient population, is they come in to see if their defibrillators work. One of the ways to test it is to actually put the patient out. The patient's heart stops. They bring him back if the defibrillator doesn't work. (Talk about being on the edge!) There are a couple of other cardiac patients that we have and can predict that a certain percentage of these patients will have near-death experiences during this event. So, this gives us another whole group of patients that we can pretest and look at some of these scales ahead of time and see what their personality characteristics are, or at least what they report, before the event happens. And then test them immediately after. I think that's going to be a big step forward in terms of some of these questions because these are big questions. Do they have certain personality characteristics that then lend themselves to having this experience happen? But the question I have for you, and it's a question I think I mentioned yesterday and even this morning, is: What constitutes evidence? Bill and I were talking about this before. Now that we have these opportunities given these patients are having these experiences, what really would be evidence or what direction of evidence would be useful in terms of getting some handle on these kinds of questions that have been raised in the last day-and-a-half?

PALMER: I think it would be good not just to use this to define who has the experience and who doesn't, but also who has what particular types of experiences. One question that would be very important is, "What kinds of people are likely to have a negative experience as opposed to a positive experience?" There are all kinds of common sense predictions you could make about that. Depressed people might be more likely to have negative experiences, or people who use certain psychological defenses like reaction formation might have positive ones.

EDGE: What sort of research or direction in research might be helpful in this area? Might another way of asking that question be, "What evidence, if we had that evidence, would be convincing of survival?"

ROLL: I don't think that is the right way of asking the question. I think the question that she asked was, "What is the evidence for having a psi-type experience?"

EDGE: Oh, okay.

ROLL: The survival issue is a different issue.

EDGE: Well, let me ask both questions then. Robert, do you want to respond to which question, or both?

ALMEDER: The question that's been going on in my mind is, "Are any of these experiences evidence for the fact, if it is, for the claim that people are different from their bodies and sometimes leave them?" Madelaine asked the right question, which is, "What would you take as evidence here that this is evidence for dualism and that people leave their bodies?" Now, if you say, "There's nothing we'll take as evidence," that's dogmatic. There are people who have made that sort of claim in interesting ways, for example, Susan Blackmore's claim that these are all hallucinatory experiences. If you say, "Well, look at those cases where people have out-of-body experiences and the content is veridical. They had no access to the material or had no possible access by way of their sensory apparatus to the states that they're testifying to." Her response is, "Well, you can't count those cases because they're not typical." Most of us believe the story to be told here is not that some of them are hallucinatory and some of them are not. The story to be told is in terms of the best cases that can't be explained as hallucinations. Those cases are going to have a lot of veridical content that's very rich and couldn't be acquired in any obvious way by being immediately present to these objects while brain functions and heart rates are down. It's also the case that people will come in and say, "Look, it's not all hallucinatory. But we can explain it by psi." These would be cases where the experiences do have veridical content, but they have these paranormal abilities. They also mistakenly believe that they left their body. In other words, you cut the experience in half: reserve the interesting part for hallucinations, namely, that they couldn't have left their bodies, but they do have true sentences to utter about things that they didn't have access to. That seems to me to be very arbitrary, too. That seems to me very ad hoc. I tend to think the voluntary OBE is the place where you are going to get the most interesting information—the people who claim they can leave at will

like Russell Targ's experiments with Miss Z and the Osis-McCormick experiment.

ROLL: Robert Monroe?

ALMEDER: No, Alex Tanous, the repeated ones.

ROLL: How about Charles Tart's experiments with Monroe, the out-of-body person?

ALMEDER: I'm not particularly interested in that one just now. Let me finish the story that I want to tell. You can't tell this story. We don't have enough time. I get the sense that we haven't been on the issue. Which cases, if any, provide striking evidence that people will leave their bodies? Now, if you start working with the cases that have a lot of veridical content, then you are going to get the usual objection that it is just psi at work. I'm not sure at all it's just psi that accounts for that. I think it's very arbitrary to say part of their story is psi, but the other part isn't. Why divide it up that way, except that it serves your purpose? I get the sense that there is a bigger discussion to be had here on the question of survival than we're doing.

TAYLOR: I just have a few general comments. The first thing is that the discussion seems to be drifting again towards the problem of evidence and how to convince reductionist scientists that alternative realities exist. At the same time I think that there is something going on here with these experiences that is not necessarily applicable to the domain of science itself but really has another function, which has to do with the way people mythically and metaphorically understand their own selves. The big problem that I see is when you get into the objective manipulation of conditions. You can gather extensive information about out-of-body experiences and collect reams of clinical data if you can find grants and locate people who are willing to talk to you. But, what does all this have to do with the individual? You are just going to transmit your conclusions to the person and somehow suppose that this is going to allow them to get to the point of transformation that you seek. I think that there is a much greater epistemological leap than we realize between the collection of objective scientific information under controlled conditions and the ability of an individual to have these experiences and perhaps to get some control over them him or herself. I think that there are domains not exactly the

same and that you cannot necessarily achieve self-realization through the scientific paradigm.

In this regard, there was a comment that John made a little earlier about time estimation under sensory deprivation. Believe it or not, I have done some scientific experiments on that subject. In one of them I took a group of 250 people through a sensory deprivation environment for varying lengths of time. I measured time estimation, heart rate, blood pressure, and introspective reports on various subgroups. The time estimation study was interesting only because most people in sensory deprivation show a consistent time underestimation. If you keep subjects in the deprivation environment for a half hour, then bring them out, they say, "Well, I was in there for 20 minutes." What we found was that, if you manipulate the conditions of the environment (we optimally biased them so that people wanted to be in there), subjects reported a wide range of time estimations. But if you took an objective measure to find out how pleasant their experience actually was and divided them into people who didn't have a very pleasant experience and those who really did have a pleasant experience, the people who didn't have a very pleasant experience had the usual consistent time underestimation. People who had a tremendously pleasant experience had the most wild variation. Either they felt that they were in there for an eternity or it seemed like the half hour passed "in just a second". That to me has interesting phenomenological implications because there is something going on there with the people who are somehow oriented positively toward that experience.

EDGE: Did the reports change in any way? For instance, were the reports of the people who thought that time was longer more detailed and richer than the ones who reported a shorter time?

TAYLOR: The problem is that once you get into that type of environment, it does depend on the person. Some people report being tremendously bored; others report tremendously rich experiences. They report a streaming flow of consciousness and a rush of images which sometimes can make it seem like the time passed in an instant or in a year. There was no consistency. It seemed that the difference was between boredom and the richness of the experience: the richer it was, the more variable the time estimation would be.

OWENS: I am sort of startled by this report because it is very similar to a finding that I reported in *Memory and Cognition* in my former life as a cognitive psychologist. I found differences in time estimation and memory for stories. Without going into the details of the experiment, there were boring stories and there were interesting stories differing only by a relatively minor manipulation. I found very strong differences in memory in terms of the amount of imaginative inferential processes of the material—very emotional inferences about what the characters were feeling and thinking, identification with the character, and very standard memory measures—between the two groups. We also found a difference in time estimation. The people who read the interesting stories and had more elaborated memories underestimated the time. Time flies when you're having a good time. People who read the boring stories had sparse but factual recalls, which faded more over time. There was a difference when we measured these people over time. They didn't have as good memory retrieval later on and their time estimation was greater than the actual time that they were given to read the story.

TAYLOR: This was a slightly different study in a sense; it was a meditation experiment.

OWENS: Yes. It's different, but it's quite similar in terms of the connection between imaginative involvement and time distortion.

TAYLOR: We identified a state of psychological suspended animation in those people who were able to have rich cognitive experience with emotional surges and deep imagery. Those who were in there long enough saw the flow of images become interspersed with periods of complete psychic rest. When they learned how to disidentify with the imagery, they would spend longer and longer periods of time floating in this experience of pure nothingness, which they described as a tremendously peaceful, wonderful experience. Then we followed them up a year later. If they had experienced the bliss of nothingness, they always said, "Gee, you know, I've kept that with me all along. It's really changed the way I think and feel about things."

OWENS: My people were just reading stories. But there's a lot that goes on when you read a story. I'd like to respond to something that Robert Almeder said about hatcheting these experiences in two. It is a problem. There is a lengthy literature on the validity of self-report in

psychology. I certainly champion the validity of self-report. However, you have to face the fact that some things that people report to you just can't be accepted as the truth. A very good example in the near-death literature is their beliefs about their medical condition. This has to do with the perceived threat of death. We've evaluated 150 cases with independent raters of the medical condition. Many people were rated not to be near death; in about half these cases there was no loss of vital signs. But many of these people firmly believe that they did have a loss of vital signs, and they say things like, "I made medical history." I've heard this reported a number of times. They really do believe that they made medical history, even though they didn't.

EDGE: It seems to me it's not just a matter of things you can believe or not, but there are also things that you can check and things that you cannot; that is, if there's veridical information, you can say, "Well, that part we know. This other part we're not sure about yet." And so, there is a kind of natural cleavage but that doesn't necessarily deny half of it; it simply says, "We can't check it."

ROLL: Veridical information in OBEs, just like in ESP, comes in terms of the mental constructs of the percipients. ESP is a kind of perception in that memories, imagination, and so forth are interwoven with it. That's why you can't combine that with the many cases of non-veridical OBEs by people who otherwise produce veridical OBEs, like Keith Harary, Robert Monroe, and many others. You can't accept that they are just stepping out of their body and are in consensus reality because they are essentially memory constructs. In other words, memory and imagination are interwoven in the experience, whether or not there are veridical elements in it. But we are completely ignoring the question about the criteria for evidence for this. No one has addressed the evidence for psi.

LAWRENCE: I would be interested in evidence for either one, for psi or for survival. I think what I'm saying is, right now we know that there are patients who are going to come into an acute care hospital who are going to have this experience. We know it ahead of time. We can predict a certain percentage of these patients are going to have it. I certainly am not as knowledgeable as the people here, but as I've read some research studies of out-of-body experiences that try to demonstrate veridical perception through electronic measurement or

impact on animals and other people. I think that the question is, "If you now have a situation where these patients are going to have some kind of experience, what would constitute evidence either that they have some kind of psi ability or that they really are out of their bodies?" I think that is the heart of the question that we have been talking about.

ALMEDER: My concern is when people have these veridical contents, what was the best explanation for them having this knowledge if they're not out of their bodies? The answer, obviously, that everybody is giving is that it is psi.

GROSSO: Not me.

ALMEDER: Well, I don't know if everybody is doing it. But there are two possible explanations for people with these rich contents to their experiences that they could not have acquired in normal ways. One is psi, and the other is that, in fact, they were right; they did leave their bodies. Now, to say that their knowledge is some sort of a construct is obvious. All knowledge is construct. The question is, "How do I have knowledge of what's going on out in Boylston Street when I'm here on my back with my eyes closed, my brain waves down, and my heart rate down?" That's not the usual access to that information. You say, "Well, it's just psi." The question now is, "What's your evidence that that is a better explanation than people would be leaving their bodies?" You might say, "Well, I have no other experience of people leaving their bodies." Maybe you don't have all that other experience of people having that much psi about events that take place far away. I wasn't saying if they say it's so, it's so. I'm saying that when you rule against a particular position, you can't do it in a way that makes it impossible for the other hypothesis to be true. I don't accept the claim that people leave their bodies because they tell me. But when they tell me a story about what went on when they were away from them and you have no access to explaining that normally, it gets interesting. We have to be careful about the logic. You just can't exclude the other side of the argument.

BRAUDE: But I would say that that is not what the proponents of the psi hypothesis do here. And, it may come as a shock to Bill Roll to discover that I'm in total agreement with him on this!

EDGE: That means it's time for a break! Continue.

BRAUDE: Whatever we know about ESP, I think it's safe to say that assuming it occurs, it would be at least a two-stage process. There would be first of all what we could call a stimulus stage. And then there would be a response or a manifestation stage. Now, a lot can happen between the stimulus and the manifestation of some ESP interaction. It's usually in the manifestation stage that subjects add their own analytic overlay or their various other cognitive idiosyncracies to what's going on. This is also the place where so-called telepathic deferment might occur. That's why some people seem to have their ESP responses some time after the presumed interaction would have occurred. I'd say it's fair to conclude that when we look at the totality of evidence for ESP and the way in which it usually gets bundled in quite cognitively idiosyncratic ways that it is reasonable to think that subjects having veridical OBEs are experiencing a kind of imagery-rich form of ESP, which not all people who manifest ESP do, and that they are simply, let's say, packaging veridical information in ways that are visual; whereas other people might do it in ways that are auditory or without any kind of imagery whatsoever.

MISGIVINGS ON SURVIVAL RESEARCH

ROBERT ALMEDER

Introduction

In his recent and favorable review of my *Death and Personal Survival*, (Almeder, 1992) John Beloff (1993) claims that, even so, as a result of reviewing the book, his expectation of surviving his own death in any form increased only minimally. He has reservations about some of the evidence and the scope of what it ultimately proves when the evidence is persuasive. Because some of his expressed views on these matters often seem reflective of fairly general and familiar attitudes towards the evidence, it may prove helpful to discuss his stated misgivings. After responding to these specific misgivings, I would like to add my own misgiving, not stated in the book, about Cartesian egos and the relevance of personal survival in the context of accepting the belief in reincarnation.

First Misgiving: Reincarnation and Christianity

In a historical digression having nothing to do with the validity of the empirical evidence for reincarnation and as an effort to explain resistance to reincarnation in the West, in *Death and Personal Survival* several reasons were offered for the view that, as a matter of fact, Christians should have little or no difficulty in accepting belief in reincarnation. In the context of that digression, I happened to say that, for the Christian, "Belief in some form of reincarnation would make it considerably easier to accept the idea of an all-good, all just God Who wills that everybody be saved" (p. 80). In commenting on this sentence Beloff (1993) says:

Does this mean that we should regard someone who is born with a pitiful deformity as having brought this fate on him or her self as a consequence of sins committed in a previous life, thereby adding a moral stigma to that person's congenital misfortune? And how could an all-good, all-just God

make his creatures suffer for sins about which they remain totally ignorant?
(p. 154)

The problem is that the misgiving Beloff here expresses does not seem to have anything to do with the point being made in the section Beloff quotes. Indeed, the section in question merely points out that for a Christian, belief in reincarnation has, or should have, the effect of minimizing the sense that God might be acting unjustly if somebody was born with cruel deformities. What seems unfair of God to do without reincarnation might well seem not unfair as long as reincarnation occurs as some sort of a mechanism for achieving the moral perfection necessary for salvation, which may take a number of reincarnations to achieve.

Nevertheless, belief in reincarnation, as I had argued, does not imply, even for those who might believe in God, that anybody born with a horrible deformity should be assumed to have brought this deformity on as a consequence of sins committed in a previous life. The evidence for reincarnation implies nothing of this sort. We are equally at liberty to believe that our native endowment in any incarnation is not deserved but given and serves more or less as a catalyst for some form of moral development or learning experience that one might only acquire because of such endowment. Being born poor and crippled may, for example, be the source of developing in a later incarnation human compassion for the less advantaged.

Philosophically, of course, belief in personal reincarnation by no means solves the problem of evil for those who may happen to believe in both an all-good, all-powerful God and reincarnation. Indeed, an all-good and all-powerful being should be able to bring it about and whatever moral lessons one acquires from suffering one can also learn without suffering. So, belief in reincarnation by no means solves the problem of evil for a Christian, or a Jew, or anybody who believes in an all-good, all-powerful God. The good news, however, is that belief in reincarnation does not require belief in the existence of God. Moreover, there is no empirical justification or philosophical justification of any sort for believing that one's moral imperfections in one life are visited regularly by way of some form of corporal punishment in the subject's next life. We can, if we like, (and we

should) defer commentary and plead ignorance on why some people are born with pitiful deformities, or why they and their forebears just happen to have the genetic potential they end up with. It is an interesting question, of course, but one upon which the evidence for reincarnation casts no light at all. Failure to answer such a question is in no way directly relevant to the adequacy of the evidence for reincarnation. So, again, the problem of evil should not be listed as a special *misgiving* relative to the data, and the force of the empirical data, for believing in reincarnation. One would be justified in believing in reincarnation, but from an evidentiary viewpoint, the evidence has no bearing whatever on why, how, for what purpose, and for how long the process goes on. Whatever one believes as answers to the latter questions, there is no empirical evidence for those beliefs. My only point was that if anybody did, for whatever reason, believe in a God both all-good and all-powerful, then they could easily regard different native endowments as good for attaining moral progress of some sort, and that with reincarnation it is certainly easier to suppose that those born with pitiful deformities are thereby going through a learning process that we will all need to endure in order to achieve some moral perfection—unless, of course, God, for some reason or other makes exceptions. As it is, however, it was a throw-away sentence. People who reject belief in the existence of God because of the problem of evil, certainly cannot for that reason alone reject the evidence for reincarnation. There is no logical connection between the two. Nor does the evidence for belief in reincarnation carry with it any justification for believing in any form of karma, as Beloff's first misgiving seems to imply. If one does believe in karma of some sort, it cannot be by virtue of the evidence for reincarnation alone.

In short, if people had to go through various kinds of lives to achieve moral perfection, and perhaps thereby to achieve freedom from the wheel of rebirth (as the ancient Pythagoreans asserted), then God might well require of us that we be born in one life pitifully deformed. How an all-good and all-powerful being could allow this is still a profound philosophical mystery.

The Second Misgiving: Minds and Astral Bodies

In commenting on the evidence for OBEs Beloff notes that I repeatedly talk about whether or not something leaves the body during such experiences, the implication being that, if it does, then the OBE is something more than just a peculiar type of hallucination, something indeed that affords us a prototype, or preview, of post-mortem existence (p. 154). He then goes on to say:

But this talk of leaving the body only makes sense if we equate the self with some kind of an "astral body" which can detach itself from the physical body, and it is disconcerting to find a modern philosopher adopting such occultist notions—even if C.D. Broad did play around with such ideas. Surely the key question for the survival issue is whether or not the mind can function in the absence of any brain activity. If it *can* this greatly enhances the prospect of survival; if it *cannot* then, whatever information we may acquire in the course of our OBE by dint of such traveling clairvoyance and whatever PK effects we may produce in the course of it, it affords no guarantee of survival...Unless we can prove that the entire brain is defunct during the OBE and not just the cortex, we cannot rule out the possibility that the OBE is just a special kind of hallucination with, at best, clairvoyant trimmings. Unfortunately, the current technology of brain research cannot provide a definite solution to this problem. (p. 152)

There is nothing particularly occultist, however, about believing in mind-body dualism of the sort adopted by Plato and by very many other philosophers who assert that the core of human personality is not reducible to material or biological properties of the brain. Platonic or Cartesian dualism may not be fashionable these days, but it is not for that reason occultist in some dark and rationally depraved sense of the term. In fact, it is just false to think that if there are Cartesian egos distinct from bodies that survive the physical death of bodies, then we must equate the self with "some kind of 'astral body'". We need do no such thing. We need only suppose that human personality, whatever it is, is not identical with straightforward biochemical or biological properties although, to be sure, as a causal agent in the world it may well have some properties it shares with physical objects. What I

argued in the book is that the most careful analysis of the best cases of OBE shows that human personality does indeed detach itself from the body and function as a cognitive and causal agent in the world. Nobody knows how this happens, how often it happens, why it happens, and what the mechanisms are that allow it to happen. Some of the most compelling evidence for this position emerges, I believe, from an analysis of the Osis and McCormick (1980) experiments with the late Alex Tanous. The fact that we cannot explain the strain-gauge results without the externalization hypothesis establishes the fact that human personality is distinct from the body and functions as a causal agent capable of existing apart from the body. (See Almeder, 1992, pp. 193-198.) Asserting without proof the existence of hidden and mysterious causal powers not accessible to the scientific method may well be the characteristic of belief in the occult. But *arguing* for the existence of some theoretical entity which is a unique causal agent in the world on the basis that there is no other plausible explanation for the existence of an interesting body of empirical data, is simply establishing on an explanationist basis the thesis of Cartesian dualism. It is difficult, and disconcerting, to believe that anybody could have examined the arguments here and still conclude that personal survival somehow commits one to the belief in astral bodies or that human personality is to be explained in terms of some vaguely defined notion of an "astral body". Platonic or Cartesian dualists can live quite nicely without ever using the expression "astral body". We need only justifiably say that "I am not my body, and my mind is not my brain or a complex of biological properties".

In the above quote Beloff also says that the key question on the survival issue is whether the mind can function in the absence of brain activity, and the belief that it can has not yet been proven (p. 154). The strain-gauge data in the Osis and McCormick experiment establishes, (as I argued in Almeder, 1992) that the effects on the strain-gauge cannot plausibly be attributed to the brain activity of the subject or the experimenters. Nor, as I also argued, can the effects be explained in terms of unintentional PK. Moreover, in the other chapters I sought to show in many different ways that there are many cognitive achievements that cannot be explained by appeal to brain functions, achievements such as the ability to speak in a foreign language one

could not have heard in this life, and so on. The question of survival, moreover, may be as much a matter of whether we can successfully explain some cognitive behavior in non-reductive physicalist terms.

In short, there is nothing particularly occultist in believing in dualism and belief in dualism does not require, even to explain some OBEs, belief in astral bodies. Secondly, I submit that a close examination of the evidence from research on OBEs will reveal that there is no non-arbitrary way to explain what happens purely in terms of brain chemistry. Some OBEs are not hallucinatory experiences and they cannot be explained in terms of psi, super or otherwise. Their only explanation is in terms of minds that separate from bodies and in that activity function cognitively independent of brain activity.

The Third Misgiving: The Super-Psi Objection

Beloff's third and major misgiving about my general thesis concerns my attempts to rebut the super-psi objection. The cases of Rosemary Brown, Matthew Manning, and Patience Worth are examples of people who had acquired skills that seemed to require an explanation in terms of super-psi. Of my discussion on the "Patience Worth" case he says:

Curiously, the author mentions at one point a well-known case of Pearl Curran, who purported to receive the communications of "Patience Worth". He certainly does not ask us to regard *this* case as one of discarnate communication and yet, as he reminds us, "Patience was quick, witty and capable of spontaneously composing well-regarded poems and novels in highly Saxonized English." Given such cases, then, can we put a limit to what the unconscious, with the aid of super-ESP, might conceivably achieve by way of concocting plausible cases of apparent posthumous communication? (p. 155)

First of all, in nearly every chapter there was a sustained discussion and rejection, rather than a simple dismissal, of the super-psi hypothesis. My general objection to the super-psi hypothesis is that it is no explanation at all and that one might just as easily say that the cause of the phenomena in question here is God's inscrutable and

arbitrary will. Admittedly, nobody wants to place limits on the power of the subconscious mind. But there is a world of difference between the imposition of such limits and appealing in a proposed causal explanation to a cause the existence of which can neither be falsified nor verified because it has absolutely no test implications. For example, along with Stevenson, I have argued that there is absolutely no empirical evidence that anybody has ever acquired via ESP either the ability to speak in a language they have not been exposed to, or to play an instrument skillfully that they have not seen. There is a logical difference between these kinds of skills and the skills Patience Worth manifested...the latter were propositional skills. And that is why they lend themselves to some possible explanation in terms of ESP. But the former traits are ones for which there is absolutely no evidence that they can be, or have been, produced by ESP. Nor is there any record, for example, of ESP ever producing the kind of propositional success evidenced in the George Pellew (G.P.) case. But, here again, the difference is that the kind of evidence offered in the G.P. case is logically consistent with the kind of evidence produced by ESP. That is why survival is the best explanation available for cases in which the subjects manifest these traits in certain ways. Instead of accepting the survivalist hypothesis, however, our anti-survivalist ups and says that we can explain the acquisition of these traits by appeal to super-psi; and if we say that there is absolutely no evidence of anybody ever learning how to do these things as a result of super-psi, we are then told that we are placing arbitrary limits on super-psi. At least the hypothesis of reincarnation is empirically falsifiable in many ways. But how would one falsify the hypothesis of super-psi? Certainly it is logically possible that in these cases these phenomena are in fact caused by sneaky super-psi. But how would one empirically falsify alternative explanations offered in terms of super-psi? How would one confirm them? For that reason alone, any explanations offered in terms of super-psi are shamefully *ad hoc*. They serve no other purpose than to prevent inference to the survivalist thesis, but this they cannot succeed at because they appeal to a merely logically possible cause for which there is no empirical evidence at all in these cases. From the viewpoint of an explanation, one might just as well claim, as we saw above, that God does these things. That was roughly my point and the argument

defending it was laid out in nearly every chapter where the evidence admitted of the supposed alternative explanation in terms of super-psi. I see no reason to change that argument and less reason to think there is any substantive evidence that super-psi is working in the difficult and interesting cases rather than admit to the survivalist hypothesis.

Moreover, curiously enough, Beloff admits that appeal to super-psi in some of these cases is shamefully ad hoc. Presumably, this implies that in those cases the survivalist hypothesis is the best available explanation. I am not at all sure that one can have it both ways which Beloff seems to desire. Nobody should put limits on the powers of the subconscious mind, but one cannot legitimately appeal to those supposed powers unless one can show that they in fact exist and are working as causes in the cases in question. I submit that that has not been done. It might have been nice if Beloff had examined the arguments rather than claim that I simply dismissed explanations in terms of super-psi.

Conclusion

In his closing comments, Beloff says that the position he finds most convincing is to assume that survival occurs but that it is a rare freak; and that this, after all is said and done, would put it on a par with most other strong psi phenomena for which we have evidence. He says this because he thinks that the evidence for survival is very rare indeed (p. 155). First of all, in response to this claim, admitting that some people survive their deaths seems to put Beloff in the awkward position of having to endorse the view that at least *some* persons are not identifiable totally with their bodies, and that that part which is not so identifiable survives biological death for some time, for some purpose or other, and by some mechanism or other. Does this commit him to the existence of "astral bodies" or other occult entities that he thinks it is disconcerting for a philosopher to accept? Fortunately, as I argued above, belief in personal survival, even if only a rare number survive for reasons we do not know, does not commit anybody to the existence of astral bodies. But it does commit one to the uniqueness of a mental

substance not identifiable with the brain, and which in some important measure defines human personality.

The next interesting question is whether it is sensible to suppose that survival is not as rare a phenomenon as Beloff suggests. Beloff thinks this because he believes that the evidence for survival is very rare. On the contrary, however, I believe the evidence, all things considered, is not at all rare. That is why I wrote the book. The evidence for reincarnation alone is very strong and is being repeated daily by many different investigators. The evidence from the study of OBEs, apparitions of the dead, and some mediumship evidence (especially, the G.P. material) also seems quite persuasive—although to be sure, one might like to have more. In all likelihood, Beloff's reservations about the force and extent of good evidence is probably a function of his enduring sympathy for super-psi as an explanation for some of the important data. But, as we noted above, any explanation offered in terms of super-psi is ad hoc and not worthy of rational acceptance in those questionable cases affecting survival evidence. It may not be enough to produce robust conviction in the minds of some, but for others, like me, it will be adequate to establish the fact that some people survive their biological death. Technically, of course, we can only claim survival for those subjects in those cases that have no plausible alternative explanation outside of survival. But is there a plausible argument that all humans survive because all humans are, after all, the same basic kinds of beings? If there is, it would be an argument to the effect that if some people survive, then since these some people are like all people in those relevant respects that are appropriate to survival, then in all likelihood, all humans survive. There is no reason to think that only good or evil persons, for example, survive death. There is much evidence to suggest that survival is not based on one's moral achievements or defects. Nor would it seem to have anything to do with one's culture, gender, intelligence, or wealth. In short, in those cases where we conclude that people have survived, there is nothing that all these persons have in common except a mind and various mental dispositions. That in itself should move us along the way to the conclusion that survival is in all likelihood a universal phenomena, and Beloff may well find himself surprised in the end. Admittedly, however, this is only a sketch of an argument, or the

suggestion of an argument. The argument needs to be put forth in greater detail, which I shall try to do elsewhere.

My basic reservation about the survival question is somewhat different. My reservations have to do with how we understand survival within the context of reincarnation. My basic reservation is that reincarnation, even if true for everybody, does not offer us very much by way of personal survival over a long period of time. After all, as the person I am becomes reincarnated, the person I am becomes smaller and smaller with each succeeding reincarnation because each succeeding reincarnation adds more personality traits to the historical person. In short, in the long run my current personality will suffer much alteration and thereby, relative to the person I now am, becomes ever more diluted by way of its felt effect in the world. Specifically, when Napoleon reincarnates the new person is say Smith, of which Napoleon is a subset of some sort. As Smith lives, the personality of Smith becomes a blend of the preexisting Napoleon personality and other traits that Smith picks up in the reincarnated life. And the same occurs with respect to Smith. When Smith reincarnates into Jones, for example, then as Jones picks up more traits, Napoleon becomes a smaller subset of the personality traits of Jones. And so it goes right on down to the 400th reincarnation of Napoleon when the personality of Napoleon as a result of the accretions from new lives is by no means the original Napoleon. He is a faint shadow of his former self. The person I am changes dramatically throughout the reincarnation process until I am no longer at all the person I was. In short, there is some reason to believe that if reincarnation is the survivalist mechanism, one loses one's personal identity through dilution from the process. This seems to imply that the person I am slowly disappears throughout the reincarnation process. Is this something one should desire or feel comfortable with? But then again this is not unlike something we do every day as our personality changes in basic ways owing to the effects of the world in which we live and our native capacities. But perhaps the problems with personal identity are much more complicated than this, and perhaps it is a mistake to describe the reincarnation process as a perpetual dilution of one's identity.

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DISCUSSION

BRAUDE: I'm not sure where to begin, Bob.

ALMEDER: Everybody must know Steve and I have this ongoing dispute on the role of super-psi. Go ahead.

BRAUDE: What you call the typical anti-survivalist position, one advocating super-psi, as you I think know, it is not my position. So, I wonder whether you are just setting up a straw man. First of all, it's not just an ad hoc hypothesis for several reasons. One is that at the very least there are certain kinds of bridge phenomena which would suggest that the leap to the kind of super-psi we might need to posit in these cases is not a very big one. I'm thinking of the evidence from physical mediumship and lots of the evidence from good spontaneous ESP cases. Quite apart from that, though, I'm not even sure what sort of measure of impressiveness we would appeal to here. I mean, it's not clear that there is any intelligible scale by which the "superness", if we want to call it that, of the kind of super-psi we would need in the survival cases is any more impressive than what we have found in cases of physical mediumship and spontaneous ESP. Quite apart from that, the issue isn't, in fact, whether phenomena of the appropriate magnitude are impossible. It's not just that. Rather, it's whether there's no evidence after sufficient probing that nobody's interests would be served by psi-produced evidence of survival. So, it's not just a super-psi hypothesis forgetting about the needs or the interests of the participants in the case. It's really a motivated super-psi hypothesis.

ALMEDER: In so far as the position I was talking about isn't yours, and we're all very happy about that, what concerned me was the evidence for survival. When you get down to those interesting cases, in Ian Stevenson, for example, you have about three different kinds of cases, but there would be one that involved simply propositional memories. We have people with a very rich repertoire of facts about the former existence that generally you can't replicate in terms of usual ESP. People will propose super-ESP or the ability to speak in a language that one hadn't acquired before. For example, take the Lydia Johnson qua Jensen case or the Gretchen case. These were interesting in that we can demonstrate fairly clearly that these people had no access to the language that was being spoken, however haltingly. They were speaking in well-formed sentences that were grammatically acceptable. If the discourse in those languages coordinated with the facts of that person's life in a former existence, what's the best explanation if it's not reincarnation? What I object to is somebody saying, "That could be super-psi, hidden powers of the subconscious mind to give you these kinds of..." My response there is, "But you don't have any other evidence anywhere else in the world that anybody through ESP alone can acquire the ability to speak a language that they haven't seen before. Why appeal to it here, especially when what is at issue is whether that's the explanation for these cases right here?" Now, you haven't done that. But suppose Bishen Chand sits down at the piano and plays Chopin's "Polonaise" without ever having seen it before? You could say that is super-psi. But then again if Bishen Chand sits down at the table and says, "I was Chopin in my earlier life," gives you all the facts about Chopin's life, and says, "Oh, incidentally, this is what I did in '42" and then plays this wonderful piece, I don't see that we have any empirical evidence that anybody has ever done that before, as a special skill that could be ascribed to ESP. Moreover, one of the real problems I have is that even if you do believe in super-psi and you do believe it is sneaky and it is powerful, it still seems ad hoc to appeal to it in specific cases where there are alternative explanations on the table. Your explanation is not confirmable or falsifiable, especially if the other one is. You see, that is what puts anybody who refuses to take the data as fitting in an awkward position.

ROLL: There is no such thing as super-psi as Robert said. But I am going to take a position of psi versus the reincarnation theory. The psi hypothesis as you say is a hypothesis. But the psi hypothesis is psi of the living. We know several characteristics of psi. One is that it is expressed in terms of the memory constructs of the individual. Speaking in a foreign language would, in my opinion and in yours also, contradict the psi hypothesis. My problem with the foreign language evidence is that I don't think it exists. Stevenson gave me the tapes in the Jensen case because it involves some form of Swedish or near Swedish or Norwegian. There were some Norwegian words, and there were a few responses to words said in Norwegian, the subject would come back with a meaningful reply. But these were very few and far between. If you suppose that somebody has been exposed to Norwegian films with English subtitles, you could build up a bit of a vocabulary, the kind of vocabulary that was produced in the Jensen case, in my opinion. Then there was this Bengali case, which is extraordinarily weak from an evidential point of view. I don't quite remember the Gretchen or German case, but I remember something to the effect that she came up with some wrong information about the place where she was born. But I grant you that if there was evidence, which I don't believe there was for languages or responsive xenoglossy, then, you would have to say, "That's not the kind of psi I recognize." There is an important characteristic of psi that Stevenson and others roundly ignore, and that is that the psyche is emplaced. We can pick up information about somebody else through what H.H. Price called "place memories" in locations where these people lived and died. When you make a careful reading of the Stevenson reincarnation cases, you find that almost invariably the child picks up the memories in the areas of the previous personalities or around persons who had traffic with the previous personality. They seem to be place memories, and particularly crisis memories; that is, of people who died a sudden and tragic death, been run over by trucks, for instance. Usually we don't hear of cases where the people have died under more natural circumstances. Reincarnation cases seem to be place memories, or if you wish, hauntings. There's a third characteristic of these cases. They are culture bound. There are certain societies where these cases are more frequent than other societies, societies that accept this concept on religious

grounds. So, the evidence in reincarnation cases seems to be suggestive of psi in the living. That is not super-psi, just ordinary psi in the living.

ALMEDER: We don't have enough time, but I have tried to deal with all these kinds of objections in the book whether you call it psi or super-psi.

ROLL: It is a very important distinction.

ALMEDER: The point here is, if you want to write it up to psi. Let's take the language cases. The Gretchen case is probably the most interesting one of them. I remember one linguist, Thompson who wrote an essay saying there wasn't enough data to say she was speaking a foreign language because, after all, this young person had only 32 well-formed sentences and had nine answers other than *ja* and *nein* and that just wasn't enough to have a foreign language going, although these sentences were uttered as correct responses to people who spoke in German. This linguist said, "Well, that doesn't seem to be enough to say she's speaking in a foreign language." My response is, if somebody came up to you and spoke 28 well-formed sentences other than *ja* and *nein* and those were in response to questions uttered in the language, you would say this person knows how to speak the language, however haltingly, however much. That needs to be explained. The assumption here is that it can't be. In the Lydia Johnson case I take it that was even a more problematic case for reasons that you mentioned, Bill, but there seemed to be expressions that were recognized. Also, wasn't this 18th-century Swedish?

ROLL: Well, it wasn't quite contemporary.

ALMEDER: The point is it's hard to explain that in terms of watching subtitles in movies. By the way, the business on subtitles in movies, if you watch a movie in Arabic and they put in subtitles or better yet, if you're watching a movie in English and they put subtitles in Arabic, that doesn't give you any ability whatsoever to pick out, utter, and respond to sentences in Arabic. I can't imagine anybody using that as a hypothesis for explaining why I could speak in Arabic after I had seen the subtitles. I would have to know what those sentences sounded like. I think there is more there on the languages cases than we know. As for the other issues of it being culture bound, maybe it looked like it was in early Stevenson work, but there are a lot of cases in England, Australia, Alaska, and America now. It's hard to

say that this belief is somehow or another culture bound by people who have an antecedent belief for religious reasons in reincarnation. Many of the more interesting cases from India and those places were from people who actually didn't believe in it. There are more things to be said here, obviously. But I think the discussion is right on the issue.

PALMER: I want to say in a different way what you were saying about the super-psi hypothesis, as I generally agree with it. I suspect I'll end up showing that you and Steve do agree after all. I've made the statement, as others have, that the problem with the super-psi hypothesis is that it's unfalsifiable. But I would like to make a certain qualification of that. What I and perhaps others have really meant is that the super-psi hypothesis is unfalsifiable *in and of itself*. You present a certain kind of phenomenon and someone will say, "How do we know psi can't do that?", and they stop there. I think stopping there is the problem. You can still maintain the argument that psi is "super" but to do so you have to add other assumptions that introduce an element of falsifiability. One way to do that is what Steve's done with the Sharada case. He has a theory which incorporates a lot of falsifiable psychodynamic assumptions. This provides him an opportunity to say that super-psi is going to be limited to certain situations where certain psychodynamic principles hold. We all know that these phenomena (psi, survival, or whatever) are not ubiquitous; they don't occur all the time, so they certainly have limits in that sense. If you can build a theory around attempting to explain those particular limitations, you can get away with even strong super-psi assumptions. There is still a problem, though. One of them is when certain phenomena occur only in survival related contexts. This problem may be overcome in other ways. As I pointed out in the paper I presented a couple of years ago, that one thing I look for in trying to refute super-psi is something unique to a survival related context. Trying to generalize that to the rest of psi can be problematic.

ALMEDER: I don't want to put words in Steve's mouth but I don't think he has the same sense of limit. I think you may mean you can't say it isn't the cause of this phenomenon whatever its limits may be. My response is you can't say it is.

BRAUDE: May I just comment on that for a second? I think we need to distinguish two ways in which a hypothesis may be

unfalsifiable. I would say various kinds of super-psi hypotheses are nonfalsifiable in the same way that most conjectures about what mental states people are in are nonfalsifiable. Even if a hypothesis can be unfalsifiable in the sense that you can't prove that it's true or false, it may nevertheless be true that various things can count for or against the hypothesis. I'd say that's exactly the state of affairs we have whenever we ascribe mental states to others. Strictly speaking, we can't falsify the statement that "So-and-so is insecure" as opposed to arrogant or unfriendly or whatever it might be. Nevertheless, we have various ways of tying the facts together which make certain of those hypotheses more viable than others. I'd say that in particular cases we can do precisely the same thing with regard to the psi hypothesis in the case of the evidence for survival.

GROSSO: Robert, I have heard you use the expression "somebody leaves the body". In the case of the Osis-McCormick experiment you are suggesting that Tanous left his body and influenced that strain-gauge. My question is, if it's not an astral body or something extended in space, then what other alternative remains? A Platonic soul or a Cartesian consciousness? But that is not extended in space by definition. How are we to conceive of a nonextended soul extended and located in a particular place influencing a strain-gauge? I have a little difficulty grasping that.

ALMEDER: First of all, the problem is "astral body". It seems to have an expression. It seems to have lots of connotations that could be problematic. All I'm saying here is the soul or the mind of the person can't be nothing. It has to be something, and it has to be a causal agent in the world if it's achieving anything by way of strain-gauge effect. Yet, in all likelihood, then, it would share some properties, as C.D. Broad says, in common with material objects, some of them in order to be a causal agent in the world. What else do you need to say? That it's in space and time? Fine. It's usually in my body.

GROSSO: It's in your body but it's not spatial?

ALMEDER: Well, that's another problem. If it's in your body, it's everywhere you are. So, it is spacial. People want to say, "A mind is not a physical object. Physical objects have time-space coordinates. Minds don't." That doesn't strike me as right. My mind is everywhere I am. I have physical time-place coordinates. So, my mind is not on the

other side of the room, and it's not under the table; it's where I am. It *does* have time-space coordinates. The fact that it could move around and be a causal agent in the world strikes me as simple. Now, what else does it have? I'm not prepared to say. I don't know.

EDGE: Let me jump in here and say I think it may very well be. I have not looked at the Beloff review. It may very well be that that's what Beloff has in mind. He certainly does not think that being a dualist is being occult. I have argued for a number of years with him about his dualism. He is a dualist. I can't believe that my arguments have been so persuasive that John Beloff has seen the wisdom of my views and renounced dualism. I think the point is not that he's calling dualism occult.

ALMEDER: He says if you believe that the mind leaves the body in OBEs, you have to believe in astral bodies. So, the mind has to be some sort of an astral body. If you're believing in dualism, mind and body dualism, you're committed to astral bodies. That's what he says.

EDGE: Well, not if you take the semantic point that leaving the body is spatial according to traditional views of the mind; the mind is non-spatial. I assume that's what he has to have in mind. Okay? It's more of a semantic point.

PALMER: I wanted to explore somewhat the same line that Michael was exploring, except to tie it back into what we were talking about this morning. There are different species of out-of-body experiences. Let me give you an example from an experiment of Karlis Osis: not only does he (and many others) hypothesize that we have a mind distinct from the body (which is the rudiment of dualism), but that this mind leaves the body and traverses physical space to a particular location adjacent to whatever is to be influenced or perceived. As a consequence of that physical spatial proximity, information can be acquired or some action can be performed (such as tweaking a strain-gauge). Now, is this the view that you are building?

ALMEDER: It seems to me that's right. Mind can leave the body and do these things. All the evidence seems to suggest that there is a seeing without eyes and there is a hearing without ears.

PALMER: By what mechanism would you say that the mind gets next to the strain-gauge? How would you describe or label the

mechanism by which that information is acquired or by which that action is affected?

ALMEDER: Oh, interesting. Namely, suppose you leave your body and you report that, "I saw Susie with two mismatched shoes on." By what mechanism?

PALMER: Yes. How would you label the mechanism of information acquisition or affecting the strain-gauge?

ALMEDER: All I can say is that the verb "to see", for example, doesn't require that you have these particular organs. After all, close your eyes and look at your grandmother. I presume you can see her. There's a sense in which one can see without having eyes. Hearing seems to be a little different. I suppose you can put earplugs in and still hear. So, if you ask me, "How is it that the disembodied person acquires information as a result of its peregrinations around the world?", my answer is, "I don't know how this happens." I don't have to say how it happens, nor do you. All we have to say is whatever it is, it has these abilities that seem such that we can't examine them.

PALMER: What you just stated is almost exactly our definition of psi. Unless you want to postulate something like psychic eyes and ears that function in ways similar to physical eyes and ears and require you be in a particular location to use them, what we are dealing with is indistinguishable from psi. There may be some physical limits to psi, but they're not reached between the lab room and where the strain-gauge is. I would submit that the theory that something leaves the body and goes to this particular location is at the very least unparsimonious. I don't see any need for it. We don't gain anything above and beyond simply saying that something is being done by psi. You can argue that whatever the source of psi is, it is in the body or somewhere else. Or you can just say, "I'm not going to deal with the spatial issue at all." Now, here's where I want to go back to what we were talking about this morning.

What's up?

EDGE: Time.

TAYLOR: Doesn't it bother you when you're moving ahead at full speed and someone says that your time is up?

ALMEDER: I wanted to respond to that, too. Maybe we'll do that later.

PALMER: We'll do it later.

TAYLOR: I yield the floor to my distinguished colleague so he may finish his sentence!

PALMER: Thank you. We were talking about the hallucination plus psi hypothesis versus the externalization hypothesis. I would conclude that unless you want to make the kinds of assumptions that I hope I have convinced you are inappropriate, these hypotheses reduce to the same thing. There's a more basic question about whether you have a dualistic or materialistic view of how psi works. Some people would argue that it's brains that produce ESP and PK. Other people, which I think includes most parapsychologists, believe that there is a mind associated with the body and the mind is doing the ESP and PK. My position on OBEs would leave you with your dualism intact, without assuming that the mind needs to be physically next to the object, which creates conceptual problems. So, our controversy vanishes.

ALMEDER: Ever so quickly. The parsimony argument falls when you get to the strain-gauge results. After all, do you want to say the mind is actually responsible for the strain-gauge results?

PALMER: Sure. This happens all the time in parapsychology. I can be sitting in this room with a random number generator in that room.

ALMEDER: In this particular case the effects would have to be attributed to unintended PK.

PALMER: That's been shown, too, in other contexts.

ALMEDER: When you talk about verification or confirmation, how do you prove that it was unintended PK that caused the strain-gauge?

PALMER: I would have to assume that since the person was not asked to do it, he would report that he had not done it.

ALMEDER: He didn't even know the gauge was there?

PALMER: That's right. There has been an experiment in parapsychology in which a random number generator (which I think is similar enough to a strain-gauge to be in the same category for the purposes of this discussion) was turned on. The output determined whether a person would be excused from doing a boring task; he didn't even know the RNG existed. This is as clear an example of unintentional as you can get, and the experiment worked. What's crucial here is that this kind of PK occurs in non-survival or non-OBE

contexts. You could argue that maybe in all PK something leaves the body and goes to the other location, but that would be totally ad hoc.

DISSOCIATION AND SURVIVAL: A REAPPRAISAL OF THE EVIDENCE

STEPHEN E. BRAUDE

Introduction

Despite more than a century of thoughtful and often meticulous investigation of the evidence for postmortem survival, it is still difficult to say what the evidence shows. Even sympathetic writers tend to hedge their bets when drawing conclusions. They recognize that no matter how strong the cases may be, certain empirical and conceptual problems remain (see, e.g., Almeder, 1992; Gauld, 1982). For one thing, no case is so overwhelmingly coercive evidentially that all but the most obstinate skeptics feel compelled to accept the reality of survival. And for another, nagging philosophical difficulties are almost impossible to eradicate. Indeed, they seem to appear at every step, both before and after deciding which hypothesis best explains the evidence. For example, even those who accept survival must grapple with venerable and thorny issues about the nature of personal identity and about what sort of thing survival is.

Despite those problems, however, the literature abounds in provocative cases that simply cannot be ignored. In fact, the entire tapestry of cases, considered as a whole, is perhaps more tantalizing than any of its components. Taken together, the best cases present a formidable challenge to those who would deny some sort of personal survival. But since the case for survival is still far from conclusive, what is the next step? I would say that the one thing writers on survival no longer have to do is to find cases that may reasonably be regarded as authentic. That is, we now have a substantial body of cases for which the hypotheses of fraud, malobservation, or misreporting are highly improbable. That is perhaps the major respect in which survival research has genuinely progressed over the last century. The present task for survival research, as I now see it, is to focus on problems of interpretation—in particular, either to reject paranormal explanations altogether in favor of novel conjectures about human abilities and

information acquisition, or else to find a more sophisticated way to choose among rival paranormal explanations of the evidence.

In my own initial forays into this area, I have commented on what strike me as the most serious common defects in even the best works on survival. Four such defects are particularly outstanding:

1. Writers on survival have an impoverished grasp of the literature on dissociation generally and multiple personality in particular. As a result, they frequently offer naive opinions about the nature of mediumship and the likelihood of dissociation in those cases as well as in cases of ostensible reincarnation.

2. Discussions of super-psi counter explanations tend to underestimate the subtlety and force of the super-psi hypothesis; that is, they set up a straw man by considering that hypothesis in an unacceptably weak or implausible form.

3. The literature fails to address central issues about the nature and limits of human abilities, especially those arising from the study of savants and prodigies, but also in connection with the vast literature on dissociation.

4. Authors who personally investigate cases tend not to probe beneath the psychological surface. As a result, subjects and relevant others appear to be mere psychological stick figures. This is a serious obstacle to evaluating any competing explanation (including super-psi explanations) in which needs and motivations play a role.

Each of these problems afflicts what is unquestionably one of the most interesting and potentially most valuable cases in the literature on reincarnation, the case of Sharada. Until the problems are addressed squarely, that case will remain more unconvincing than it perhaps deserves to be, and (more generally) future discussions of survival will likely continue to exhibit the same old flaws that have plagued survival research for more than a century.

I propose, then, to outline the salient facts of the Sharada case, and review some complaints I have lodged elsewhere about the literature on survival generally and that case in particular. Then I shall focus on a recently published study that appears to address some of my concerns, but instead shows even more clearly how naive the analysis of the Sharada case has been.

First, however, I must make some additional preliminary remarks. To begin with, I've been surprised at reactions to some of my previously published remarks on survival. Apparently, and despite explicit statements to the contrary, they have created the impression that I am opposed in principle to the survival hypothesis, and that I think that the evidence can all be accommodated by positing some form of super psi. So let me try again to make my position clear.

I can imagine nothing more exciting than indisputable evidence for survival. In fact, if I have any bias in the matter, it is that I would *hope* that we survive the death of our bodies in some sort of interestingly robust way. But for the evidence to be convincing, it is simply not sufficient to reject alternate explanations (especially super-psi explanations) in the anemic or simplistic forms in which they have been considered. So my earlier efforts have been directed toward making clear just how daunting a task it is to rule out the likelihood (not just the possibility) of super-psi. And the primary reason for that has been, not to mount a case against survival, but to help the literature on survival generally attain a hitherto unprecedented level of conceptual sophistication.

The rival hypothesis I want to take seriously in the Sharada case, and which I submit has been egregiously underestimated, is not simply a super-psi hypothesis. We should perhaps call it the *dissociation + psi* hypothesis, although even that does not do it justice. The hypothesis holds that the puzzling aspects of the case can be understood in terms of dissociative processes similar to those found in multiple personality, and that dissociation facilitates the use of rather refined psychic functioning at critical points along the way. The hypothesis also countenances the possibility that latent and impressive abilities or capacities may be developed or liberated in dissociative or other sorts of unusual states.

One final comment. In what follows I shall be addressing certain matters of depth psychology in the Sharada case. Now I do not pretend to be a mental health professional. But I do know a bit about dissociative phenomena, and I feel I have a reasonable (though hardly prodigious) grasp of at least some sorts of real-life human needs and dilemmas, as well as a variety of coping strategies and hidden agendas. So if it is easy for *me* to detect the psychological shortcomings in the

discussions of the Sharada case, I would imagine that persons more cunning and penetrating than I can find additional and perhaps more persuasive reasons for challenging (or possibly for accepting) the reincarnationist or survivalist interpretation of the case. And again, my aim is not to lobby for a position that I antecedently believe to be correct. Rather, I want to raise the discussion of the evidence to the level of sophistication (both psychological and parapsychological) at which it should have been conducted from the start.

Similarly, although I shall focus my criticisms on two authors in particular (Stevenson & Akolkar), I am not interested in "picking on them" or in singling them out for attack. Rather, I want to illustrate how the analyses of even allegedly strong cases have been psychologically superficial and therefore weak in a crucial respect. The case for survival and against dissociation + psi simply cannot be made on the basis of the sorts of surface details typically offered by Stevenson, or with the quality of the supplementary analysis provided by Akolkar.

Outline of the Case

The Sharada case is not simply a case of ostensible reincarnation. It is also a case of apparent responsive xenoglossy. And one reason this case is so important is that, unlike most cases of responsive xenoglossy, the subject spoke an apparently unlearned language quite fluently. Another reason is that the previous personality (Sharada) made several verified statements about a family that lived at the appropriate time and location. However, I would say that the case's most compelling features are linguistic. Other examples of ostensible reincarnation have offered more impressive (that is, finer-grained and more specific) evidence for the knowledge of a former life.

The subject in the case is a Marathi-speaking woman named Uttara Huddar, born in 1941, who lives and works part-time as a lecturer in Public Administration in Nagpur, India. At the age of 32 she began to manifest a personality named Sharada, who spoke fluent and somewhat archaic Bengali, and who claimed to be and acted as if she were a Bengali woman of the early 19th-century. Sharada claimed to have died

at the age of 22 after a cobra bit her on the toe. When she "awoke" in 1974 she did not recognize Uttara's family and friends, and she apparently did not understand them when they spoke in Marathi, Hindi, or English. (She did, however, eventually learn a few words and phrases in Marathi.) Uttara never married, and as we will see, she appears to have been quite disappointed and frustrated in affairs of the heart. But Sharada dressed and behaved like a married Bengali woman. She spent a great deal of her time in (sometimes old-fashioned) Bengali religious practices, and she appeared perplexed by modern ways and somewhat repelled by Marathi customs.

When Uttara's mother was pregnant with Uttara, she often dreamed of being bitten by a snake on the toe. Those dreams ceased when Uttara was born, and her mother claims to have forgotten them until Sharada appeared and mentioned that she had died of a snakebite on the toe. The mother's claim to have forgotten the dream may not be entirely credible, however. Indeed, both parents report that Uttara had a severe phobia of snakes throughout much of her childhood, and that after the age of sixteen her attitude toward snakes changed to one of attraction. Hence, there is reason to believe that the topic of snakes would have been a fairly common one in the household, at least until Uttara's phobia disappeared.

As previous investigators have recognized, it is important to determine the extent of Uttara's normal exposure to the Bengali language and to Bengali customs. And initially at least, it looks as if one should be skeptical, because there is no doubt that Uttara had studied Bengali to some extent, and that she had at least a modest ability to read the language. On the other hand, certain features of the case lend support to a survivalist interpretation of the evidence. For one thing, it is not clear whether Uttara had demonstrated the somewhat independent ability to *speak* Bengali. And for another, Sharada's spoken Bengali differed in various ways from the modern Bengali Uttara presumably learned while in school.

Nevertheless, a survivalist explanation of Sharada's proficiency in Bengali faces serious obstacles. Since Uttara had learned some modern Bengali, her proficiency as Sharada is not totally without foundation. Moreover, it is probable that learning a second language is a distinct process from learning a language for the first time. And when the

second language is not radically different from one's native tongue (or from a second language one has already learned), the process may be relatively easy. Furthermore, Uttara spoke English, and she had also studied Sanskrit in high school. So we know that she was reasonably sophisticated linguistically and that she had the ability to learn new languages. In fact, since Sanskrit is the language from which North Indian dialects evolved (just as Spanish, French, and Italian evolved from Latin), Uttara's proficiency in Bengali does not seem particularly mysterious, *if* we allow that additional exposure to Bengali could have occurred normally (but unconsciously) and also possibly through ESP. It might also be relevant that approximately ten thousand Bengalis live in Nagpur. Hence, although the city in which Sharada claimed to live was 500 km from Nagpur, there may well have been numerous opportunities for exposure to crucial information about the Bengali language and customs closer to home.

It is also worth noting that Uttara seemed to be deeply interested in Bengal and the Bengalis, and she even "claims that she had a strong desire to learn Bengali" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 214). Beginning in her teens, Uttara became quite attached to her father, who was "a great admirer of Bengali revolutionaries and leaders" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 214), at least one of whom had stayed with him in his home. Moreover, some of Uttara's relatives spoke Bengali, and Uttara had read Bengali novels translated into Marathi. According to Stevenson (1984), Uttara "complained that Marathi literature displayed no real heroines; in contrast, she thought that Bengali women were more courageous and also more feminine than other Indian women" (p. 81). Furthermore, as Anderson (1992) properly observes, both Akolkar and Stevenson "include information on the linguistic features of Sharada's Bengali suggesting that her command of the language, while impressive, is not that of a native" (p. 252).

Sharada first appeared in 1974, during which time Uttara was experiencing a variety of emotional and physical problems. In the early 1970s Uttara developed a deep attraction to a former childhood friend, F, with whom she had recently restored contact after a lapse of several years. (Stevenson refers to F as "Priyadarshan Dinanath Pandit.") But F did not reciprocate her feelings; in fact, he was interested in another woman. Uttara felt so exhausted and shaken by F's rejection that she

decided to devote herself to a life of spiritual development and meditation (which she had practiced regularly since 1965).

While all this was going on, Uttara was also contending with various physical maladies, including asthma, menstrual problems, and a skin disease that seems to have been eczema. In 1970 she was examined by a homeopathic physician, Dr. Z (referred to by Stevenson as Dr. J.R. Joshi), described by Akolkar (1992) as "an elderly man in his fifties" (p. 217). Dr. Z had established a combination ashram/hospital in Dabha, 7 km from Nagpur, and for several years he treated Uttara as an outpatient.

Uttara's relationship with Dr. Z is puzzling, and it deserves close scrutiny. Indeed, their first meeting proved to be a very intense experience for Uttara. She reports that when Dr. Z first touched her, it felt "familiar" and she found herself irresistibly drawn to him. She also felt that there was a connection between Dr. Z and a recurring vision she had experienced during meditation and in dreams. The vision was of a fair, tall, slim man on horseback, and it may be related to a recurring childhood dream reported by Stevenson (and in less detail by Akolkar). In that dream, which Uttara reported to her parents until the age of eight, "she saw her husband (as she said) coming to her riding a pony; he caressed her pleasantly" (Stevenson, 1984, p. 81).

Uttara claimed that her interest in Dr. Z differed from her attraction to F. Presumably, what Uttara meant by that was that her interest in the doctor was not romantic. Now whether or not that is true, Uttara's interest in Dr. Z (whatever it may have been) was apparently expressed differently from her interest in F. Indeed, it bordered on the obsessive.⁸

⁸ Actually, it is difficult to judge from Stevenson's and Akolkar's accounts whether Uttara's interest in F was expressed with the same intensity and insistence she displayed in her behavior toward Dr. Z. In his all too brief discussion of the possibly significant relationship between Uttara and F's father, Bhau, Akolkar suggests that there may not have been much of a difference. He notes that Uttara implored Bhau to intervene in her behalf, and one gets the impression that Uttara was fully occupied emotionally over her relationship with F and her desire to be part of his family.

In 1973 Uttara went to stay at Dr. Z's ashram with the intention of never returning home. She acknowledged feeling a maternal need and thought of adopting an infant and marrying Dr. Z. Uttara claimed that she didn't really care to be a wife to Dr. Z, but she wanted their relationship to take a socially acceptable form, and she also maintained that by marrying Dr. Z her friend F might feel free to marry the woman of his choice. Moreover, although Uttara insisted that she wanted only a spiritual relationship with Dr. Z, her behavior often suggested otherwise. Dr. Z told Uttara's father that she claimed they had a relationship in a previous life (Akolkar, 1992, p. 221). And indeed, Uttara sometimes behaved as if she were a jealous spouse or lover. On one particularly notable occasion, Uttara "suddenly burst into the room" (Stevenson, 1984, p. 74) where Dr. Z was dining with one of his female assistants, and began berating him in what appeared to be the Bengali language. According to Stevenson, this is one of several incidents that contributed to Dr. Z's desire to send Uttara away from the ashram.

One further interesting hint emerges from Akolkar's report, although Akolkar himself apparently fails to notice it (like many other hints discussed later). Uttara's physical ailments may have been linked to emotional problems, and possibly even to problems of a psychosexual nature that had begun to develop before her frustrating rejection by F. In fact, Akolkar cites Uttara's own accounts of how menstrual difficulties followed the reading of certain evocative pieces of literature. For example, after reading T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," Uttara felt "as though woman's womanhood had come to an end; only lust remained" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 216). This was followed by profuse menstrual bleeding described by Uttara as "like abortional bleeding." Uttara continues, "the next day as I taught the poem 'The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck' to my class, I experienced great mental restlessness at the thought that I should have such a son, and once again there was profuse bleeding" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 216).⁹

⁹ It is unfortunate that Akolkar again omits crucial details when relating this information. Was Uttara having these episodes during her period? Might she have found passages in her reading so arousing that she

Objections to Stevenson's Report

Until recently, the principal source of information concerning the Sharada case has been Stevenson (1984). But his report either glosses over or omits altogether the sorts of interesting details contained in Akolkar's independent and recently published account. These deal primarily with psychological and sexual issues mentioned earlier, which I will discuss more fully in the next section. One of my original criticisms of Stevenson was that because the sorts of issues and tensions noted by Akolkar seemed clearly to figure into the overall scheme of things, Stevenson's avoidance of depth-psychological probing left the reader in no position to settle on a plausible explanation of the case. Fortunately, Akolkar recognizes the relevance of depth-psychological issues, and he has filled in at least some missing details. Still, it is worthwhile reviewing some of my earlier objections to Stevenson before considering Akolkar's problematical handling of the material. The main reason for this is to illustrate again why Stevenson's psychologically superficial approach to case investigation (despite its undeniable virtues) does not deserve its present status as exemplar in the field. (For a sampling that adopt a similar approach, see, e.g., Haraldsson, 1991; Keil, 1991; Mills, 1989, 1990a, 1990b; & Pasricha, 1990a, 1990b, 1992. See also Braude, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c for additional criticisms.) I shall avoid, for now, my earlier objections to Stevenson's claims about the likelihood or possibility of super-psi.

In earlier articles (Braude, 1992a, 1992b), I noted that Stevenson seems to have made at best only a cursory effort to determine whether

experienced contractions that promoted serious bleeding? Obviously, these questions must be addressed in order to determine whether Uttara's bleeding was psychosomatic. Akolkar seems to interpret Uttara's menstrual problems generally and some of her other physical afflictions as intimations of an emerging and genuine previous personality (Sharada). He seems not to consider that Uttara's persistent physical problems might have been psychosomatic, or that as a hypnotically gifted individual she might have been expressing her emotional turmoil somatically, as multiples often do.

there were good reasons to explain the Sharada manifestations in terms of motivated psi. I pointed out that if the appropriate sorts of motives existed, they would only appear in the course of "an extensive and penetrating examination into the lives of clearly relevant (and perhaps even seemingly peripheral) personnel" (Braude, 1992a, p. 133).

For example, I observed that Stevenson had surprisingly little to say about the apparently pivotal relationship between Uttara and Dr. Z. Regarding Dr. Z's first touch, which Uttara said felt surprisingly "familiar" and as the result of which she felt drawn to the doctor "like an iron particle to a magnet" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 217), Stevenson (1984) says only that Uttara felt "strangely moved" (p. 105). Not only is that far too little to help one examine the relationship between Dr. Z and Uttara, but Stevenson offers no reason for thinking that Uttara's intense reaction to Dr. Z's touch was particularly strange, or different from a rather common phenomenon. I suspect that most adults have at some time experienced a sudden, intense, and apparently inexplicable—but seemingly cosmically significant—attraction to another person, only to discover later that the intensity of the original experience was readily explicable in terms of rather pedestrian hidden needs and agendas. Akolkar, at least, seems more sensitive to that possibility.

More important, however, Stevenson (1984) fails to explain what, on the surface at least, seems to be puzzling behavior on the part of Dr. Z. Stevenson notes that Dr. Z visited Uttara at home "a few times" (p. 105) after her discharge (or banishment) from the hospital. That is at least initially perplexing, because Dr. Z had apparently been feeling beleaguered by Uttara's annoying displays of interest and affection. One might think, then, that if Dr. Z had found Uttara's behavior objectionable enough to send her away from the ashram, he would not have wanted to risk deeper or additional entanglements by visiting her at home. Stevenson (1984) explains Dr. Z's actions in terms of his "interest and perhaps compassion," but he says the doctor "indicated no deeper attachment to either Uttara or Sharada" (p. 105). Evidently, Stevenson attempted to figure out whether there had, in fact, been a deeper attachment, but according to Stevenson Dr. Z was evasive and unrevealing during his interviews. The only explanation Stevenson

offers for that evasiveness was that the doctor found Sharada's attentions embarrassing.

But that explanation is difficult to accept, especially in the face of rather obvious sorts of doubts that Stevenson makes no effort to dispel. For example, it is not clear why Dr. Z would have felt embarrassed by Uttara's attention and affection. Since patients often fall in love with their doctors, one would think that a doctor in his late 50s might have encountered that phenomenon before. Therefore, one might have expected Dr. Z simply to take Uttara's interest in stride. Moreover, if Uttara's behavior was so embarrassing and her attention "discomfiting and potentially compromising" (Stevenson, 1984, p. 105), why did the doctor visit her several times at home? That could not have helped to quell any affection Uttara might have felt for him, and it could only have offered further opportunity for embarrassing confrontations. If Dr. Z was moved only by interest or compassion, as Stevenson claims, then one would think that either his embarrassment was not all *that* acute or else the doctor's interest and compassion were strong enough to overcome it. But in either case it is unclear why Dr. Z would have been evasive in an interview. If he felt no (or only a little) embarrassment, it is difficult to understand what he might have wanted to conceal, especially in conversation with a psychiatrist who presumably understands the concepts of transference, countertransference, and other aspects of the patient/doctor relationship. And if Dr. Z was feeling ordinary human compassion and a strong (but merely professional) interest in the case, one would again have expected him to be more cooperative and forthcoming in his interview, even if he felt embarrassed by Uttara's behavior. After all, he was talking to a medical colleague, not (say) a tabloid reporter.

There may, in fact, be nothing worth fussing over here. But given the superficiality of Stevenson's discussion, there is no way to know. The important lesson this teaches is that it is simply not enough to be told *what* subjects said. For example, it is not particularly helpful to learn simply *that* Dr. Z. denied feeling attracted toward Uttara (or Sharada). It is important also to know *how* he denied those feelings—that is, what his tone and manner were. Might they have shown that he had something to hide? Stevenson tells us only that the doctor "practiced masterly evasion" (p. 106) during their interview.

As I had also noted in my earlier article, Stevenson sheds equally little light on the subject of Uttara's feelings for men. He recognizes that there may be some significance in the fact that Uttara never married and that Sharada claimed to be married. In fact, he concedes that "frustrated aspirations for an independent domestic life may have found fantasied satisfaction in the role of Sharada" (Stevenson, 1984, p. 144). But after noting that Sharada "hardly satisfies all the criteria of the idealized, fulfilled, married woman," (p. 144), Stevenson dismisses that possibility with the rhetorical question, "why did she not complete the fantasy with a happy ending?"

It is rather astonishing that Stevenson abandons the topic at this point. Apparently, he made no effort to understand Uttara's fantasy life in all its richness and subtlety (and Akolkar's report shows that Uttara's fantasy life seems quite robust). Or, if he did undertake the appropriate depth-psychological investigations, he does not share his results with his readers, so that they could answer his rhetorical question. But perhaps more important, Stevenson seems to think it obvious that if Uttara *had* used another persona to act out her fantasies, that persona would have been an idealized model for her aspirations. But it is quite incredible (especially for a psychiatrist) to think that people generally express their fantasies in such a straightforward and flagrant way. For one thing, if a person lives out a fantasy in too obvious a manner, it loses much of its psychological utility. Moreover, our fantasies may simultaneously represent our feelings on many different issues. We need to know how, exactly, Uttara felt about men, children, and marriage generally, and perhaps also her parents' marriage in particular and the major male figures in her life (her father, Dr. Z, and F). And we need to know how that entire *constellation* of feelings might have expressed itself in fantasy.

Since Akolkar's report deals more thoroughly than Stevenson's with depth-psychological issues, let us now turn our attention to his efforts.

Akolkar's Report

As I suggested earlier, one reason Akolkar's report is so striking is that he shows, much more clearly than Stevenson and much more

clearly than Akolkar himself realizes, why it is plausible to interpret the Sharada case in terms of dissociation + psi. The evidence seeming to point in that direction strikes Akolkar as suggesting instead either possession or the persistence of a really previously existing Sharada residue deep in Uttara's mind. Perhaps Akolkar's conclusion is correct. But I submit that he has unwittingly presented a stronger case *against* that position. Apparently, that is because (a) he seems unfamiliar with the literature on dissociation and perhaps also with the more general literature on psychopathology, and (b) he seems both clearly disposed in favor of reincarnation and also rather credulous and naive about parapsychology generally and the reports of Indian mystical phenomena in particular. For now, it will be sufficient to consider only the first of these problems.

Before launching into specific criticisms of Akolkar's report, one general observation merits our attention. Our present concern is to consider the viability of the dissociation + psi hypothesis as an explanation of the evidence for survival. And that means we must take seriously the possibility that subjects in survival cases are displaying phenomena akin to those described in the literature on dissociation generally and dissociative psychopathology in particular. The usual form this has taken in the past has been to consider whether subjects (usually, only mediums) are really manifesting a form of multiple personality. And typically, the problem afflicting those discussions (even very good ones) is that by relying on a somewhat outdated picture of multiple personality, they have underestimated the scope and variety of dissociative phenomena one might reasonably expect to find in survival cases (see, e.g., Broad, 1962; Gauld, 1982).

Interestingly, an analogous problem may threaten to undermine discussion of the evidence of survival even when the author is well aware of the current state of research into multiple personality. For example, in a recent paper, Hughes (1992) examines similarities between multiple personality disorder (MPD) and trance channeling, and concludes that the two activities differ in many respects. But she does not address the crucial underlying issue. What matters is not whether we can explain the evidence for survival as a form of multiple personality *disorder*. In principle, there may be various, and relatively functional, forms of multiple personality that do not qualify as types of

psychopathology (or instances of MPD). Hence, what matters is whether mediumship and subjects in reincarnation cases display possibly non-pathological forms of multiple personality, or else other dramatic dissociative phenomena closely related to MPD.¹⁰ (See Braude, 1991.)

Returning now to Akolkar's report, consider, first, that Uttara's personality changes began at age 32. That is late for a typical reincarnation case, but not at all surprising for someone suffering from a dissociative disorder. (See Braude, 1991.) Moreover, the Sharada personality appeared after Uttara entered Dr. Z's ashram and while Uttara was apparently preoccupied with "emotionally charged thoughts regarding her friend F as well as Dr. Z" (Akolkar, 1992, p.223). Let us assume (as we have good reason to do) that Uttara is reasonably gifted hypnotically. Then it is not at all difficult to imagine how her painfully thwarted relationship with F might have led to the creation of Sharada as a dissociative defense, a defense that would accomplish at least two important goals. First, by developing an alter-like entity (Sharada), Uttara could express and experience emotional and physical urges she could not reasonably expect to satisfy as Uttara. And second, that alter personality (or ego state) would allow Uttara to feel as if she (that is, Uttara) had become "spiritual" in the sense of transcending the physical and emotional needs manifested by Sharada. Unfortunately, however, Akolkar accepts Uttara's description of her spiritual quest at face value. Indeed, he claims there is no reason to assert that Uttara suffered from any emotional or psychological disorder. He writes, "There is no evidence of mental illness or behavioral abnormality" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 241).

¹⁰ Hughes' study might be somewhat misleading in another respect as well. The multiples surveyed in her analysis seem to have exhibited the now-classic symptoms one finds in cases in North America and Western Europe. One can only wonder, then, what Hughes' results might have been had she included in her study cases of MPD from (say) Brazil or India, where the symptom language of multiple personality seems to assume culture-specific forms, and where the similarities between MPD and mediumship may be more striking.

But that claim is quite preposterous. Quite apart from the evidence suggesting that Sharada was created as a dissociative defense, Akolkar (1992) notes that at the onset of the Sharada phenomena, Uttara "experienced spells of blankness and an inability to recall" (p. 220). In Uttara's own words, "there was a veritable tug of war" that would make her weep. "She would gaze at the moon for hours and would sometimes stay awake for four or five consecutive nights" (p. 220). Sometimes she would "feel frightened, hear strange sounds, see luminous columns of air infused with consciousness, and occasionally have sensations of soft, cool, fragrance." More interesting still, Uttara suffered "repeated occurrences" (p. 221) of visions, including (Uttara reports) "somebody beating me," which "would interrupt her meditations and prayers" (p. 221). "Sometimes, in a frightened state of mind, she would feel like running, shouting, rolling at someone's feet, and she would long for somebody to console her" (p. 221).

Akolkar's report contains several other puzzling comments, which suggest that Uttara had various intense relationships and feelings that required further exploration. And some of these additional hints are disquietingly reminiscent of patterns emerging from the literature on dissociation and abuse. For example, the curious reader can only want to know more about Uttara's relationship with F's father, Bhau, which seems to have been rather intimate. Uttara dreamed "of becoming the daughter-in-law of Bhau's renowned family" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 216). She also apparently confided to him her interest in and frustrations regarding F. In fact, she "implored" him to intervene and convince F to marry either her or the woman in whom he claimed to be interested. But Bhau took no action. In itself, that reticence is not peculiar; Bhau might simply have felt it was not his place to interfere. But Akolkar quotes Uttara as saying something that suggests a rather different sort of motive on the part of Bhau. Uttara claims that Bhau told her, "Like a straw to a drowning man, your support is like that of a little goddess" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 216). But Akolkar provides no context for that remark. Not only does he fail to note and explain its sexual overtones, he never even explains what sort of support Bhau might have been referring to.

And as if all this were not enough, Akolkar gives many examples of the overlapping of Uttara and Sharada. But he apparently does not

realize that dissociative processes seem never to be totally independent, and that the overlap of Sharada and Uttara looks very much like the familiar phenomenon, *co-presence*, observed in many cases of MPD. Hence, he fails to see how that overlapping strengthens the dissociation + psi hypothesis. An additional fact supporting that hypothesis is that Uttara engaged in automatic writing, which not everyone can do. Dissociators (hypnotically gifted individuals), however, can. Also, when Prof. Kini (a consultant on yoga) touched Uttara's forehead with his index finger, Uttara went immediately into Sharada. That, too, looks like the behavior of a highly hypnotizable individual. And again, Akolkar (1992) reports that Uttara would "sort of see" (p. 223) another image behind her own in the mirror. That is also quite similar to a phenomenon reported by many multiples, who tend not only to be gifted hallucinators, but who even hallucinate their alters at distinct locations in a room.

Apparently to support his easy acceptance of Uttara's interpretation of the facts, Akolkar (1992) claims that "Uttara had the capacity for honest, self-searching introspection" (p. 241). Now it may well be that Uttara's accounts of her emotional life are honest. But contrary to what Akolkar apparently thinks, that does not rule out the possibility of various forms of self-ignorance and self-deception. Indeed, Akolkar offers several clues suggesting that Uttara's capacity for self-searching introspection had definite limitations, especially when it came to her sexual and emotional needs. We have already considered how Uttara seems to have suppressed or repressed her sexuality and need for a male partner and retreated to a form of sexless spirituality. In addition, however, Uttara was "enraged" (Akolkar, 1992, p. 212) when her responses to a Rorschach test were interpreted as indicating sexual abnormality. And she refused to reveal a dream with possibly erotic imagery to a psychologist "for fear of its being interpreted according to Freudian analysis" (p. 220).

In light of these clues, and also in light of Akolkar's (1992) admission of Uttara's "important biopsychological needs" (p. 241) and frustrations, it is quite astounding that Akolkar could claim that Uttara "did not derive any gain through the representation of Sharada" (p. 243). Quite apart from Sharada's obvious utility as a dissociative defense against Uttara's emotional and sexual frustrations, there are

even further clues, provided by both Stevenson and Akolkar, as to what Uttara could accomplish by creating an alternate personality. Sharada's behavior allowed Uttara to do many things that would otherwise have been unacceptable. For example, her jealous and intrusive behavior toward Dr. Z could be disowned, so to speak, and ascribed instead to a previous personality who claimed that Dr. Z had been her husband in a former life. Moreover, as I suggested earlier, Sharada provided a way for Uttara to behave, dress, and feel like a married, childbearing woman, while avoiding the condemnation she would almost certainly incur by acting out those feelings as Uttara. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the Sharada manifestations declined as Uttara reached her forties, at which time the prospects of marriage and childbearing would no doubt have seemed more remote. Moreover, Sharada, but perhaps not Uttara, could successfully criticize both the lifestyle and home of Uttara's parents, and she could get away with adopting superior and condescending attitudes toward them and toward Marathi culture. In fact, as Sharada, she could even avoid helping Uttara's mother with chores. I submit that these sorts of conjectures are hardly far-fetched in the case under consideration. Indeed, they are commonplace and plausible both in everyday contexts and in the clinical literature on dissociation. Hence, until investigators offer strong reasons for rejecting them, they must be taken very seriously in working out a plausible explanation for the many features of the case.

It also seems as if Akolkar (1992) errs when he claims that Sharada displays a "full range of...personality" (p. 242). Granted, Sharada is not an obvious or crude personality caricature; she does not seem to be as flat a character as some personality fragments in cases of multiple personality, which may have no more than a single identifiable function (Braude, 1991). But even if we grant that many non-multiples have rather severe personality limitations, it is questionable that Sharada was a robust personality, or at least more so than one finds in most highly developed cases of alternate personalities. Even in those cases one finds, at least after a while, that the personalities lack the depth and breadth of personality one finds in most non-multiples.

Conclusion

Akolkar's report disappoints on various other counts as well. But the foregoing considerations demonstrate clearly that the case of Sharada is more interesting as a human drama than investigators seem to have realized. In fact, there is reason to think that *most* cases are more interesting psychologically than their case reports would suggest.¹¹ All too often, however, parapsychological case studies present subjects as if they were little more than mere possible emitters of psychic functioning. Case reports do not really describe their subjects; parapsychologists seldom make an effort to find out who they are and what really moves them. Perhaps that is understandable; perhaps such an inquiry is beyond their professional competence, and perhaps we should appreciate the fact that they have at least made the necessary first step toward ruling out counter explanations in terms of fraud, misreporting, and so forth. Nevertheless, the subjects of both spontaneous case investigations and experimental reports are full-blown human beings, who (like the rest of us) struggle with the intricacies and vicissitudes of life and who (like the rest of us) are teeming cauldrons of needs, fears, pains, and interests. It is reasonable to think that the better we understand those subjects, the more likely we are to be able to discover important clues to the correct interpretation of the evidence and generate plausible explanatory hypotheses. In fact, it is difficult to see how one could explain the *form* psi functioning takes in particular cases without first coming to grips with the psychological complexity of the subjects.

¹¹ My own modest case investigations have only reinforced my conviction on this point. It has taken almost no effort to discover that the majority of subjects in those cases are either in abusive relationships with spouses or significant others, or else that they are in the midst of some other form of domestic turmoil. Moreover, in the few instances where it has been appropriate for me to inquire further, subjects report that apparent psychic phenomena did not occur prior to those relationships or situations.

So I think that the major lesson to be learned here is methodological. Ordinarily (that is, outside of case investigations in parapsychology), when we find people exhibiting striking behavior or exceptional cognitive skills, we naturally ask: what happened to these people? What's their story? Did anything in their life cause them to be this way? And generally speaking (or at least often), the answers to these sorts of questions have been fruitful and illuminating. That is why we now understand something about the etiology of MPD and other forms of psychopathology. More generally still, quite often we can gain considerable insight into people's present behavior by looking at their history, and the specific and often quite idiosyncratic forces and issues that shaped them.

So it is quite astonishing that we do not (and have not) probed as deeply into the psychology of mediumship or cases suggesting reincarnation. Here, too, we have examples of very unusual behavior, and once we start looking it appears that the lives of the people in these cases are at least as convoluted and psychologically rich as anyone else's, and quite possibly more so. But parapsychologists generally make only the most cursory inquiries into their subjects' lives. Instead, they too readily look for impersonal cosmic explanations, and apparently forget that they are studying real people grappling with real needs, fears, and other issues.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that we should ignore more cosmic or exotic (parapsychological) hypotheses. (In fact, I would be one of the last people to say that.) I am saying only that we resort to them prematurely in connection with survival research (and other case studies), long before we have exhausted reasonable alternatives having to do with real-life grubby issues and concerns, with an occasional amount of hefty psi among the living thrown in for good measure. (See e.g., Braude, 1986, 1987, 1989.)

So perhaps this is where the next breakthrough lies in survival research. Let us be as probing about the subjects in these cases as we are (or at least should be) in our own lives, and in the lives of those who display other peculiar types of behavior. Granted, this sort of inquiry may require a different type of researcher and different

investigative skills than those that have dominated parapsychology. If so, then I would suggest that it is time for the field to change.¹²

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¹² The research for this paper was supported by a grant from the John Björkhem Memorial Fund.

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DISCUSSION

OWENS: As a psychologist I'm very interested in the interaction of depth psychology, dissociative states, and paranormal process. I've been struck in this study of near-death experience the number of cases involving a loss of the babies in childbirth. I almost commented on the case of Sarah this morning. There was an odd tone to her narrative though these things are hard to prove. It was my sense that it was different from a typical case of out-of-body perception in making statements like, "I saw someone that looked like me," "I saw someone that looked like my father," and thinking that the problem with the leg was her baby's leg. I almost talked about this kind of motivated error

that she was making in that it was difficult for her to accept the fact of what had happened. I thought it was a little bit too far afield to bring in those kinds of psychological processes. I've seen evidence of them and I think that's a really interesting direction to take.

BRAUDE: I can only endorse that. My guess is that most cases, if they were described even cursorily, would have various kinds of details that might make us wonder about the possibility or the likelihood of other relevant, grubby, filthy psychological facts going on under the surface. It's unfortunate that most cases, though, are described at such a superficial level that perhaps all the relevant details are left out. For example, when Stevenson does his surveys about the cases in order to rule out possible counter-hypotheses, he focuses on such things as the interval of time between the death of the previous personality and the appearance of the apparently reincarnated personality, as if those kinds of details are going to be the sort that could possibly be meaningful to the particulars in the case. It seems to me those are precisely the sorts of details that are irrelevant. What matters are those details of the case which happen to be meaningful to the particular people in a particular given situation. And that may differ wildly and idiosyncratically from one case to the next.

OWENS: I don't know if you mean that the sexual part is the "grubby and dirty" part or the grief and bereavement?

BRAUDE: I just meant the stuff you have to get at.

TAYLOR: I have several general comments. I took the equivalent of two years of Hindi, which is the national language of India. You can't go to school in India without learning Hindi. I was told at the end of two years that if you remember 5 different rules and have 12 alternative words, that you could communicate with any Bengali that you met who also knew Hindi and they'll understand what you have to say. You'll begin to speak the language in a way which conforms to the popular way in which it's communicated. This instance brings up a point for me because I haven't ever studied Bengali, but I have been able to talk in a halting way with Bengali people by remembering those rules. It strikes me as being somewhat ludicrous because this lady comes from a culture which to me has a depth psychology which includes the paranormal, and it's so much more sophisticated than we have. It reminds me of the story that Carl Jung told of the wise old

man who was very revered by the young people in the village. He lived by himself and went into these deep profound states of meditation. Between times he used to amuse himself by doodling on the wall. The elders in the community finally rose up in arms against this man and killed him. They copied all the symbols on the wall thinking this was the source of his religion. They went back and created their new religion with themselves as the priesthood in the village, trying to get the young people to come to them using what were really doodles. It appears to me to be the same thing here. We have an empty tool box that we're approaching this with. I'm just affirming what you were saying. I didn't hear anything ethnographic or anything from a cross-cultural psychological standpoint that didn't try and superimpose a Western Judeo-Christian, scientific view onto this phenomenon. It just comes off as quite thin for me, as I think you were trying to indicate.

ALMEDER: I have a little problem with the alleged finding that Stevenson's case studies are incredibly superficial. The Sharada case strikes me as one that wouldn't be very interesting anyway, given the age at which she started. I don't think Stevenson would take that as a serious case.

BRAUDE: He devotes a lot of pages to it.

ALMEDER: Yes, he publishes. But I think if you asked him, "What are the five or six cases that seem to be very interesting?" I don't think he'd list that one because she started off at age 32 and she did have a lot of exposure to a lot of languages. It wouldn't be a case that I would pick out to be a good one. But on the assumption that it is out there and one should take it seriously I still wouldn't because I think the question to be explained here would be her capacity to speak this language. Let's suppose you're right and there was a liaison between Dr. Z and Sharada. That isn't relevant to the whole discussion of whether or not she could have acquired the language. In other words, depending on what you would think would be important in the evidence, you might not want to press the question of whether they were having an affair because presumably, even if it was true, it would not explain her ability to speak in a language that she hadn't had any prior familiarity with. So, there is a sense in which even if it turned out that this psychological explanation or description of the features of people involved is thin, it is not really relevant to the important

question. I have this gap between the things that you say a good case study would provide and the explanation of her ability to speak the language. You see what I'm getting at on that? As for the other cases, I want to be a little careful. If you examine the cases of children who remember previous lives and alternative objections that people give to some of the better cases, Stevenson has a model and they are well detailed and very strong. I would feel awkward saying that he was superficial in his analysis of the data. I'm sure he could defend himself much better than me. There may not be depth psychological dimensions to these discussions, although I do remember in the Sharada case, he extensively examines the possibility whether, for example, these are placed memories and how they could be placed. Who could be doing it? How is the child being tended to? Things of that sort. When he puts the thing all together and deals with an alternative explanation, I think he does it very well. Now, in this case you might be right. I had the same feelings about this one. I was wondering about that. By the same token, I wouldn't include it as one of the better cases to forge the issue. I have one problem with most of the discussion on these things: If you find a bad case, you don't want to generalize too quickly from a bad case or one that wasn't done well. The trick is to focus on the very, very good ones and explain these. If people start knocking off the good ones, then you're in trouble.

BRAUDE: My focus on the Sharada case was not because I thought it was particularly strong but because it's unprecedented in that we finally have some of the details which would allow us to generate a workable counter-explanation in terms of motivated psi. I would say that, contrary to your assessment of Stevenson's descriptions of the other cases, he doesn't have all the answers to all the other counter-hypotheses because he does not ask certain kinds of crucial questions. He really does not ask, "Whose interests would be served by there appearing to be evidence of reincarnation in this family of this form?" He addresses that in only the most cursory, superficial way. I think you can't address it only at the psychological level at which he proceeds. You need to ask the kinds of grubby questions that Akolkar is asking in connection with the Sharada case. So, that's the importance of the case, not that it's evidentially strong, but because it's psychologically rich in its presentation in a way in which no other case presented is. As

far as the linguistic evidence is concerned, there is an issue I didn't really discuss much here, and that has to do with, again, the question you raised about how good that linguistic facility is. I don't think we're in a position to judge that finally until we are somewhat clearer about the significance of the data on savants and prodigies who apparently display abilities at least as impressive and as discontinuous from some of their other capacities as what we see in the best cases of responsive xenoglossy, quite apart from the other issue about how easy it is to acquire or manifest a second language or a third language after one has already learned a first language or a second language.

GROSSO: Steve, I just have one comment. I certainly agree with you in terms of probing the needs and psychologies of the people who produce the evidence for survival. My only problem is that the prober also has a psychology. It seems to me that different kinds of psychologists could probe the same complicated rich story and come up with completely different kinds of interpretations. I couldn't help noticing, for example, you used the expression "sexless spirituality". Now, the way I caught it, it was kind of a condemnation. That implies a point of view. I'm not questioning your point of view. But it is a point of view. It is an assumption about human nature that you have imported into your analysis and your commentary. My misgivings center on who is going to do the analysis.

BRAUDE: I actually did not mean that as a condemnation when I referred to a sexless spirituality. But it is nevertheless true that that was the style of spirituality to which Uttara retreated. It's a common enough phenomenon in the psychological literature that one way of handling difficulty in love and life is to retreat to a lifestyle where those issues simply don't come up.

GROSSO: You use the word "retreat". See, you've imported a theory, I mean, an interpretation. I'm not denying that that interpretation may have truth or validity, too. But we are faced with the fact of who is examining this evidence from a psychological point of view.

TAYLOR: What did she retreat to? This could be an ashram that practiced Bengali Tantrism. That is not a sexless spirituality; that's sexual activity as the basic view. I think we need to know more of the details as you were suggesting.

BRAUDE: I have no objection to more details.

LAWRENCE: I'm not sure how this process of sorting for reincarnation goes about. The other question pertains to the word "hypothesis". It doesn't seem to be used consistently and I'm not sure how it is being used. Although I support your basic premise, I would assume that, if you're going to investigate a claim of reincarnation, one of the things you might want to check out first, to dismiss it as an alternate explanation, is somebody with multiple personalities or highly dissociative personality. It seemed to me that that might be a process. This probably goes back again to my question of evidence. How do you build a model for a case for study? Or is there a model? The word "hypothesis" is used and yet it doesn't seem to be a systematic investigation where you say, "You don't do this, and you don't do that, you check out this first, and then you proceed in this way." I don't know if you're alluding to the need to do more psychological probes, for example, in these kinds of cases.

BRAUDE: Definitely. I don't know that you have to approach these with any sort of Procrustean model in mind. We know quite a lot, it seems to me, at this point about various forms of dissociation and various kinds of dissociative psychopathologies. So, it's easy enough to inquire, given sufficient detail, whether there's any reason to think that what is going on in any particular case is something like what we already know. One can then frame various hypotheses about the likelihood of such and such a kind of dissociative process taking place rather than something that would suggest evidence for postmortem agency. I think you don't need anything more than that to frame a dissociation + psi or motivated psi counter-hypothesis. Is that getting at what you're asking?

LAWRENCE: The hypothesis to me is usually the question, then the evidence either supports or rejects the question or the direction that you're taking it. In other words, the hypothesis usually doesn't explain the data. You use the data to support or reject a hypothesis. Obviously that's more true in an experimental model. There are other models, if you're looking at case studies, of how to analyze the data.

BRAUDE: The hypothesis would be explanatory. That's the idea. I mean, you could make a general hypothesis about the evidence. You might say and I might say (in fact, I think I have said) that the evidence

for survival might all be explicable in terms of motivated psi among the living. I'm not sure I believe that's true. But I think that's what needs to be investigated. Now, that's a general hypothesis. We would look at the more specific hypotheses for each particular case. We might say in the Sharada case the best explanatory hypothesis is that Uttara contrived Sharada as a dissociative defense, possibly drawing on certain psi abilities along the way, at crucial points to make it look as if she was the reincarnation of this woman who lived in the previous century in a city 400 km away.

TAYLOR: That's not a hypothesis.

BRAUDE: That's not? What is it?

TAYLOR: Pardon me for calling out of turn, but to me from a strict experimental sense a hypothesis is something that's testable. It sounds to me like a conjecture.

BRAUDE: It's testable in the way that every psychological hypothesis is testable.

TAYLOR: But you didn't then follow a hypothesis with the method by which that hypothesis would result in some empirical conclusions. Because you kept on with it, it sounded to me like a conceptual conjecture upon which we would want to formulate a specific testable hypothesis out of which facts could be garnered to prove or disprove it from a strict experimental standpoint.

BRAUDE: An odd claim coming from someone who wants to demean that particular standpoint.

TAYLOR: I have a degree in experimental psychology. Why not?

BRAUDE: But I was not generating an experimental hypothesis. It's testable in the sense in which conjecture about the mental state of any human being is testable.

TAYLOR: Well, thank you. Because I was just responding to what Madelaine was saying about the use of the word "hypothesis". And in a strict sense to me that really has very definite limits within experimental psychology.

BRAUDE: I would never use the word that way.

PALMER: I'm particularly interested in the dissociation + psi hypothesis as a general alternative across all of the reincarnation cases. But there is a problem in trying to generalize to all cases from any particular case, for the same reason that C.E.M. Hansel would like to,

but can't, demolish all the evidence for ESP because he successfully demolished, say, the Soal experiment. In that connection, it occurs to me that one vehicle for gaining some insight into the generalizability of the dissociation + psi hypothesis would be to look at how well it can handle certain laws or generalized relationships that Stevenson has found in his cases. One of the most obvious ones is that most of the people who have these memories are young kids. That raises the question: Is the same true about dissociation? It would be nice to have that kind of data from India, but at least, I think, we have it from the States. In fact, you even mentioned that this morning in some other context. Is it, in fact, true that dissociation is more common in kids, and particularly in kids about the same age as when these reincarnation memories seem to come?

BRAUDE: I'm not sure we know that dissociation occurs more frequently among children. But certain kinds of extreme dissociative disorders appear to begin in childhood. So, children may, as a dissociative defense, become multiples; whereas by the time you're a teen or an adult your personality is already a little more rigidly fixed. And so, any dissociative breaks won't cut quite so deep, and you might develop other kinds of dissociative pathologies.

PALMER: I'd like to point out that the dissociation + psi hypothesis is not necessarily contradictory to either the reincarnation or the possession hypothesis. One of the areas where I would like some bolstering in terms of the theory I was presenting yesterday is, "what defines successful percipients?" Since I'm assuming that they don't have actual psi themselves, dissociation might provide part of the answer. That's one of the things I'd like to explore with you some time.

BRAUDE: Sounds good to me.

OWENS: I wanted to mention that at the Division of Personalities Studies there has been extensive discussion along these lines, looking at the motivations of the family in the child cases. Many cases have been studied by Antonia Mills, who's an anthropologist. She studied quite a large number of cases in India. I think anthropologists are a little more sophisticated about their personal perspectives and cultural perspectives and the way they interact with the data that they collect. She's sensitive to those issues. She has proposed a very large-scale

study comprising a comparison of India and the United States by looking at things like hypnotizability and imaginary playmates. She's doing this work in collaboration with Erlendur Haraldsson, who's developed a whole battery of psychological tests to give to these children who report these experiences, comparing them with various control groups. The need to look at the motivations of the family and cultural construction in these cases is something that she's very interested in and has been a subject of much discussion.

BRAUDE: I'm encouraged to hear that.

ALMEDER: On the business of motivated psi and PK explaining the data, in a rough and ready way I think a good explanation should allow you to predict the data to be explained. It seems to me there's a gap here with this model you're developing and the data to be explained. For example, how would motivated psi or PK explain, assuming it were true, this woman's ability to speak in a language she hadn't learned?

BRAUDE: The only way in this particular case I would see psi entering into it, given the weakness of the linguistic evidence, is that whatever additional exposure Uttara might have needed to the Bengali language and Bengali customs to come up with information about (and it was meager information about a family that lived about 100 years before) might have been acquired unconsciously and through ESP. It wouldn't require a whole lot of psi in this particular case.

ALMEDER: See, now, you keep coming back with what I take to be a very controversial claim; namely, that ESP can account for a person's ability to speak a language they've never seen before.

BRAUDE: No, account for the ability to acquire what little information might be needed in conjunction with her already robust linguistic abilities to do what she was doing, given the exposure she had to Bengali language and customs right at home.

ALMEDER: Let's assume (and I'm not sure it's true) she's speaking a language that she hasn't been exposed to. How would this explanation in terms of motivated psi and PK explain that unless you already assume in some other contexts we have independent evidence that through motivated psi and PK people can pick up languages they haven't been exposed to? I don't see any evidence for that.

BRAUDE: It may be the only sort of evidence we have for this kind of ability in connection with linguistic capacities. One of the reasons I take the evidence for savantism and prodigies to be relevant is that there we see people manifesting various kinds of abilities, usually more remarkable than the linguistic abilities demonstrated even in the Gretchen case, that are in many ways, in the case of savants, discontinuous with other things we know about them. In the case of prodigies they're pretty formidable, whether or not they're clearly discontinuous with other things we know about those individuals. We don't know how to explain that. So, until we have a firmer grasp on why prodigies and savants can do the things they do, I think we need to import all of that into this particular body of evidence and look at it on a case by case basis. It's not just that you explain it in terms of psi.

AFTERNOON GENERAL DISCUSSION
DAY TWO

TAYLOR: I have one or two things to say to Robert that I didn't get a chance to say. First of all, I wonder if you didn't mishear your detractor [Beloff] and he didn't say, "Shame on you;" he said, "Shaman you!" I'll tell you the reason I was thinking about that when you said it.

ALMEDER: Well, he didn't say that.

TAYLOR: I know he didn't say that. I was just responding to my phenomenological state. I saw these great epistemologies of Christianity and religion converging together in one spot as you were speaking. It made me think that science is Christianity without a God since, of course, science has grown out of principally Christian culture, meanwhile denying it has anything to do with religion. That was what I heard. You made me think first about some of the differences between the Old and the New Testament. In the Old Testament Jehovah is the God with a lot of rules and no mercy. In the New Testament we have the myth of the resurrection of Jesus. Within the myth of the resurrection we have the basic principle of the transcendent, which is the basis for popular folk psychology today in the United States. Spiritual transformation of personality is not an idea derived from Old Testament religion. I was really looking at science and religion in relation to the Old and the New Testament. The reason I make this comparison is that you were dealing with a concept of reincarnation, which I know principally through Hindu and Buddhist epistemology. I'm not that familiar with it within a Christian context except that I have always thought in a metaphoric and symbolic sense that the myth of the resurrection of Jesus and the idea that at the Day of Judgment the dead will rise again are rebirth motifs, if you would, if taken in a visionary or metaphoric sense. I'm sure that you know and I would like to certainly be informed of the history of how this idea dropped out of Christianity because it was probably there in the beginning, given all the other influences of the early Christian church. I see it is as a historical problem. So, to hear you talk about reincarnation and whether or not there is belief in a God is somewhat problematic to me. Most of the time I was following you, I was considering reincarnation

in a Buddhist context. Buddhism is, of course, a non-theistic religion. The goal of Buddhism is not sin and salvation so much as the end of suffering. It isn't so much a theology as it is a psychology of transformation. And so, the mixing of these two great epistemologies together seemed to me somewhat incompatible. I was able to follow you as long as I stayed within your frame of reference because that is really what I think you were trying to achieve in responding to whatever this gentleman had said. But I feel that the main point for me in what you said was that there is still a lot of Christianity in the positivist science that we espouse.

ALMEDER: Well, it wasn't my intention to say that. You found it there? I don't know what you mean when you say that there's a lot of Christianity and Judaism in positivist science.

TAYLOR: I was referring to science as it arose in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Positivist science is a *reaction* to the Judeo-Christian religion.

ALMEDER: That has nothing to do with natural science.

TAYLOR: Well, in a certain sense I think that it does. I think that everyone will admit that while normative testing is the primary focus of science, nevertheless, creative hypothesis formulation, intuitive insights, and rich mental imagery still go on there. Justine was trying to indicate that yesterday with the example of Kekulé. The fact is that we are still human beings who grew up in a Judeo-Christian culture that produced science. Even now science remains the most important contribution that will long outlast the culture that created it. We seem to come to science with very culture-bound constructs. That's why I thought it was so amusing to be giving an example of a woman from India, who seems to have some evidence of a former life. To interpret her experience in this weak scientific Judeo-Christian context seems somewhat absurd, if you know anything about Eastern religion and philosophy. The way those expressions would be understood within the cultural context of India has nothing to do with the conversation we are having. Personality transformation has nothing to do with the issues of science in my opinion. Science has no comprehension of that process. Phenomenologically, however, I also believe that culture does color the way in which you try and conduct empirical science.

BRAUDE: Well, now you lost me, too, because I don't understand why you say the Indian cases have nothing whatsoever to do with what's going on in the culture. Because in those cultures, as well, these cases are regarded as significant precisely because they are cases of ostensible reincarnation. It's an issue for them in that culture to determine whether the evidence is genuine.

TAYLOR: Yes. But the way you have cast it, you make it seem like the Western empirical scientific method of truth is universal and value-free and applicable in all cultures. I think it's just the Western view superimposed upon other cultures.

BRAUDE: This is not the Western view of scientific method. This is the interest in deciding whether claims are true or false.

TAYLOR: I completely agree with what you're saying because that is the way Indians think today. After all, they have been thoroughly educated in the Western tradition.

BRAUDE: The mere concern with truth and falsity of statements and whether people's behavior is deceptive or not has to do with the Western method of science? You know, that was something that people were interested in before there was a Western method of science.

TAYLOR: But within a traditional religious context in India the question of reincarnation was posed quite differently.

BRAUDE: In those cases of reincarnation?

TAYLOR: Yes, except for the Indian scientist who has been trained in the Western method of science who wants to take it up.

BRAUDE: You think the families don't care whether their child is really a reincarnated individual?

TAYLOR: I think that they believe it without the kind of proof that you are trying to offer them through science.

BRAUDE: The family might, but the neighbors might not.

TAYLOR: I think, ultimately, decisions about reality by Indians, themselves, are made on grounds other than the scientific evidence we might present to them.

ROLL: I, too, was somewhat disappointed with Steve's paper, not for the reasons just mentioned but because I couldn't find anything wrong with it. I like Robert's paper much more!

ALMEDER: Thank you very much.

ROLL: I don't think Stevenson has responded to the place memory theory. In other words, memories are encoded in space not only in brains and they can be picked up in space, not just from another person. I also would ask you to consider the OBE hypothesis. I think in the same article that you were referring to by Osis and McCormick, Osis said something to the effect that OBEs show many of the characteristics of ESP including the characteristic of psi missing. I believe that's a near quote from the article. An old term for out-of-body experience is ESP projection—the image of projecting something out of the body. Very little work, unfortunately, has been done on the physiological and neurological aspects of OBEs, but with Keith Harary, we found that while his brain waves moved towards alpha and indicated a receptive, quiet state, his body showed signs of activity such as increased breathing and heart rate. There's another series of observations about OBEs which was first noticed by Charles Tart with respect to Robert Monroe. Monroe is one of those who has apparent veridical OBEs; mixed in with those OBEs are fantasy OBEs and OBEs where he seems to be experientially in the right environment, but what he sees is not what is there. Tart found that Monroe's rapid eye movements were absent when he was asleep. He suggested that the OBE activity had taken over dreaming for Monroe and that the OBE was a kind of dreaming, a kind of hallucinatory activity. I would like to consider the possibility that OBEs depend upon an active nervous system. They may be projections and when this nervous system folds, as in death, the OBE disappears also because it's dependent upon an active brain. This, by the way, goes with a hypothesis that OBEs serve the survival of the body. The OBE reflects a mechanism whereby we can project our experience of the self outside the body. By apparently occupying a non-physical self we leave the damaged body to do its own repair without our consciousness being present with all the stress and the anxiety that is associated with that. Do you see? It's a sort of dissociation that allows the body to do its own repair in its own time. It's like the ejection seat of a fighter airplane. You go out of the body. You leave the body to its own repair. All of us may have this sort of homunculus in the brain that can do that.

ALMEDER: I take it that's not a question; that's just a comment.

ROLL: Let's say it's an invitation to respond.

ALMEDER: The first thing was about Stevenson who hasn't responded to the place memory hypothesis. Are you claiming that memories float through the air, and somehow or another the children pick them up?

ROLL: No. They don't float in the air. They're connected with physical systems, not only with brains but with the places where the events took place.

ALMEDER: How do children get these memories, then?

ROLL: If you don't make a distinction between mind and matter, if mind and matter, in fact, are not sharply distinguishable, we may leave our memories not only in brain structures, but we may also leave our memories in physical space, in tables and chairs, in walls, and in fields. People who come into these areas may then have an experience of what went on in the place. Typically, these are traumatic events just as they tend to be in hauntings.

ALMEDER: So, are you saying that memories are physical objects that float through the air and stick to walls and things like that?

ROLL: They don't float.

ALMEDER: Well, how do they get to the walls?

ROLL: Your memories don't float around your head!

ALMEDER: I'm trying to make sense of this. Somehow or another that means memories leave the people when they die, float around the universe, and attach themselves in the neighborhood and on the walls.

ROLL: I'm trying to communicate to you and to everyone else who cares to listen that the mind, the psyche is emplaced. In other words, it is not restricted to a body. It's not just embodied; it's also emplaced. Aptly, places are evocative of memories, not only in the psychic way but also in the psychological way; we tend to remember events that have happened in a certain place when we enter that place. The same thing operates parapsychologically. It's not my idea. It's Price's idea. That was how he accounted for psychometry—apparently picking up memories from objects. And that's how he accounted for hauntings. If you examine rebirth memories, you find the same characteristics there; that is, they tend to be remembered when the kid passes through a village and thereby picks up memories from the life of a deceased individual who used to live there. The same may happen when someone who knew the deceased becomes a neighbor of the kid. With this

person or with this place comes the memories, comes the events, the traces, or the fourth dimensional manifold of which this three dimensional one is a cross-cutting. Whatever the terminology is, there seems to be something like memories that are emplaced.

BRAUDE: Well, you'll be relieved, Bill, because we now have something to dispute. You resurrected one of our oldest disagreements! The problem I have with that view, quite apart from what Stevenson may or may not have said about it, is the problem I or any red-blooded anti-mechanist would have to any trace theory of memory. It doesn't matter whether we're talking about engrams in the brain or Plato's theory of traces as impressions in wax or Pribram's more apparently sophisticated but equally crude view of the holographic analysis of memory. If the very concept of a memory trace is incoherent, it doesn't matter whether they are in brains.

ROLL: Forget about traces. The point is that I carry some memories around in some way or another. My brain is at least a place of accessing memories. So, you can call space, the table over there, or whatever, a place of accessing memories associated with the past history of that object. I don't like words like "traces" and "engrams". I don't know where they are. I haven't found any, you know. In reading the literature I don't see that there's any evidence for them. What there clearly is evidence for is that you can remember things associated with physical bodies. You can also remember things associated with other people among the objects where these people have lived. Psychometry is a rich area but nobody's paying any attention to it. This is what Eileen Garrett's practice essentially was based on.

BRAUDE: But are you not saying that memory is in objects?

ROLL: Basically what I want to say is that memories are accessed through or by means of objects.

BRAUDE: But that's noncommittal as to whether memories are in them.

ROLL: I don't know where they are. That way is trivial. Get to the issue of the thing, Steve.

BRAUDE: Well, I'm trying. I'm trying to figure out what it is you're saying. If all you're saying is that by handling some object a person can remember things associated with it, that seems to be true. That's the truth of psychometry. But it's not an explanatory hypothesis.

If you were trying to explain that in terms of memories being in them in some way, that's explanatory, but false.

ROLL: Well, I'll go with that. Then we agree again. This is not getting us anywhere. We're agreeing more and more!

EDGE: Eugene, do you agree?

TAYLOR: Only if you believe that all matter is conscious. To me that solves the problem because what you're trying to say is there is some relationship between what is going on with a human being and things going on out there in the physical world. So, if you are a pansychist, then it's quite plausible. If the thing is dead and something has to pass from something living to something dead and adhere to it and you have to be able to see it or measure it in some physical way, then obviously, we are going down the wrong road here. It seems to me that what's at issue is something much more interesting, which has to do with the fact that we sense the discussion should go in this direction. To do so with a scientific frame of reference, is not going to get us there. There is an alternative explanation.

ROLL: I think that this is getting us in the right direction. I also think I'm going in the right direction by postulating that the psyche is emplaced. Once you postulate that the psyche is emplaced, you have an explanatory framework for these place memories. They are reincarnation memories. From a certain very significant point of view they are rebirth memories in that they are continuations of ourselves or of the psyche in physical objects. But they don't necessarily require the postulate of a separate self or ego to sustain these memories.

EDGE: But that's precisely what you want, isn't it, Robert?

ALMEDER: I take it that, for you, the child has these memories, and that's to say the child remembers that something or other is so. The act of remembering would seem to be something that is an activity associated with certain brain states, although not in the child. I have trouble with the idea. It is just a matter I don't understand. It could be memories out here that one accesses too. It seems to me a peculiar way to talk about a memory and that somehow or another when I die, my memories float about. I guess the question is: How do these children get them if they are reincarnation memories? You might say, "Well, we don't know how." There is nothing wrong with the idea of a set of memories and a whole batch of other things surviving one's corruption.

When it picks up another body, that is probably what we mean by reincarnation. Is that what you are saying, that the children have these memories because these memories are actually properties of minds that somehow or another get assimilated into people? In that case the children are reincarnated.

ROLL: Well, yes. But furthermore I'm saying that these memories are accessed through physical objects that the child gets into contact with. And getting into contact with the physical object, the child thereby gets into contact with the memories associated with that physical object.

EDGE: So you are not talking about an isolated personal identity that gets transferred from one body to another, which is the more classical view of reincarnation. You're talking about another mode of explaining those memories, which brings up the interesting question of: What would count as evidence for survival? Is there anything? Have we made the question of survival unfalsifiable? We've asked whether or not super-psi is unfalsifiable. Is the question of survival unfalsifiable now? That is, is there evidence that we could think of that if we got it, we would say, "I now think I have it"? Given that our epistemological hopes are a little lower, that is, we need reasonable levels of evidence, is there anyway that we could reach this level? What would it be?

PALMER: In the ultimate sense, probably not. The reason is that whether something survives or not is very much like the question of whether God exists. You are asking a metaphysical question. You are asking to reify something, to make a reality statement. I don't think we can ultimately do that. But I'm not sure that's as great an impediment as it might seem to be on the surface. What we are attempting to do in science is to create models of reality. Often we consider these to be conventions, like Steve's distinction between level of description and substance. Sometimes the models, like in some computer models, don't correspond to something that we would call real. We try to set these models up in such a way that they generate predictions, and then we test them. To the extent that those predictions are confirmed, we say that the model is "true". I think this is what we can do and what we should do in survival research. This is the point I was trying to make in the first part of my paper—to try to get a model that has certain

empirical consequences. If they are confirmed, then in that sense the model is true. That's as far as we can go. The final step beyond that is; for example, "Are there really psiads out there," which is a step that we can't take with science. I'm not sure we can get there at all. On the other hand, there is a sense in which what we do in science is really no different than if we ask the question, "Is this table real?" With reference to an argument which I think I got from Bertrand Russell in his *Principles of Philosophy*, I get certain sensations, and all I have direct contact with are those sensations. They are coordinated in a certain way. I see a certain thing, and when I try to touch what I see, I get certain sensations. Putting all these sensations together, I get this concept of a table, from which I conclude there's really a table there.

EDGE: What group of sensations would you need to say, "There's survival out there"?

PALMER: Sensations from data, meter readings, or whatever, based on confirmations of my theory or anybody else's theory that provide for survival.

ALMEDER: I think you can conclusively falsify it. If you can conclusively falsify anything, I think you can conclusively falsify things like reincarnation in much the same way that you could falsify the hypothesis that there were dinosaurs. As a matter of fact, I think we probably know as strongly that people survive their deaths as we know that there were dinosaurs. You could falsify the dinosaur hypothesis. If somebody could empirically confirm that in all those cases where we had so-called alleged bones of dinosaurs, they were really things like rhinoceri that those bones were constructed arbitrarily, by various people who wanted to have fun and that the footprints were put down by people, you could falsify the hypothesis that there were dinosaurs. We all believe it. It just so happens that belief in the existence of dinosaurs is the best available explanation to fit all the data, the fossils, the bones. I can't reproduce it at will. But if I go to Asia Minor and walk around and keep digging and sculling around, I might find another. So, continually finding evidence helps the confirmation that there are dinosaurs. In the case of dinosaurs if we don't get any more remains or fossils, it wouldn't follow that there weren't any dinosaurs. It just follows that there were a limited number, and we got them all. Now, on reincarnation if you believe in reincarnation, then what would

happen if all of a sudden you couldn't get any more cases of people who claim to be reincarnated, nobody had those memories, and there weren't any systemic, unified, rich cases of those memories accompanied by certain skills like linguistic skills, xenoglossy and things of that sort? Well, you wouldn't have to conclude that reincarnation doesn't exist anymore. Maybe all the people are reincarnated; the rest have somehow or another stopped reincarnating. I think you could disconfirm the reincarnation hypothesis if you could prove empirically that, in fact, people who had these skills, for example, the ability to remember these sorts of things in past lives or speaking languages that they hadn't seen before, all had some sort of a little brain defect and you found there was a neurological zip on certain parts. Then all of a sudden you could somehow or another manipulate somebody else's brain and find that under those circumstances they started telling the very same story. In other words, I can imagine where the alternative explanation could only be done in terms of brain chemistry because you could manipulate the brain to get the same effects of people who would start telling these stories about their past lives and playing the piano that they hadn't seen. I can easily imagine that as a matter of fact all of this phenomena could be the result of neurologically idiosyncratic people. You might find that out. If that were to occur and you could induce it by that kind of brain activity but couldn't get it otherwise, I would drop the thesis of reincarnation right away as an empirically falsified hypothesis. I know what I would take as evidence changing my mind. What bothers me is that there are people who say, "No matter what the evidence, this won't happen." As for out-of-body experiences, if John can take the best or the strongest cases of OBEs, I don't have any problem identifying ESP with brain states that don't require minds. But if you could actually explain in a reasonably plausible way how you could move objects at a distance during these cases and produce that fairly regularly, I'd drop the claim that OBEs are evidence for survival. You would have to go from case to case, from area to area. I think in mediumship it would be quite different. There are some other things there. I can also give you other reasons, too. But I'm convinced that all of that is empirically falsifiable and that it's an empirically meaningful hypothesis.

BRAUDE: Well, as someone who is often portrayed as not taking anything that would count as evidence for survival, let me just say what I would find personally compelling. It would have to be a constellation of things. We'd have to find a case where, first of all, we would be dealing with ostensible knowledge "how" rather than knowledge "that". Propositional knowledge simply won't cut it. But, if a subject in an ostensible case of survival displayed an ability which, as far as we could tell, was radically discontinuous from any other abilities that the subject had and if sufficient psychological probing into the case revealed no hidden needs or agendas relative to which evidence for survival would be deeply meaningful or important to that person or to people close to that person, and if the ability manifested by the subject were clearly associated with the equally idiosyncratic ability of some individual who we know to be dead, then I'd say we have a *prima facie* case for dismissing the super-psi hypothesis and accepting the survivalist hypothesis.

EDGE: If you have one and three, would that be sufficient? Why would two be necessary? That is, if you can give a psychological case that a person may be motivated toward wanting survival in some way, and you have the first and the third conditions satisfied, would it be necessary to satisfy the second?

BRAUDE: It is a good question, and I am not sure. I think it would probably depend on just what the nature of the ability was that was in question, how discontinuous it was from everything else we know about the person after a careful examination, and how clearly or thoroughly it reproduces or mimics the abilities we uniquely associated with a deceased person and how idiosyncratic that was. That may be enough. But we haven't got any case that comes close to meeting any of those conditions. So long as one and three are not robustly satisfied, then I think the issue of motivated psi becomes more important.

OWENS: Why the distinction between procedural knowledge and propositional?

BRAUDE: It seems to me that so long as we are dealing with mere knowledge "that" rather than knowledge "how," that is, the mere acquisition of information. There are reasons for thinking that any living person, given suitable circumstances, could have acquired that information by psi. I would say one of the cases that has strengthened

my conviction about that is Eisenbud's treatment of the Cagliostro case which, although not coercive, suggests how knowledge of some pretty recondite information can be acquired by people in a survivalist context when it would be relevant to those concerned.

EDGE: In other words, I think what you're saying is we have good empirical evidence, laboratory evidence even, for propositional psi.

BRAUDE: All that requires is the mere getting of some information. If it is there somewhere in a library, if it is there in somebody's mind, then it's not much of a leap from what we already know to be the case about even humdrum ESP. If I were suddenly to manifest certain abilities that are quite discontinuous with other capacities that I have and if those abilities were to be uniquely associated with the idiosyncratic and quite striking abilities of some deceased individual, I think that's *prima facie* more impressive. And I think that's why people have on the whole focused on knowledge "how" rather than knowledge "that" as being most impressive.

ALMEDER: There's one qualification. I read that same story, too. But I have some reservations about it because I think Stevenson pointed out that there really isn't very good evidence from psi that young people at that age are as accurate or as detailed as they sometimes turn out to be in these cases. In other words, I tend to agree with you that it's continuous with a psi explanation. But there's a level of achievement and success that these children have that isn't plausibly attributable to psi just because they haven't practiced it before; it's very focused, and it's extremely reliable in high degrees, probabilities of 90%. You don't get that typically in psi. They're usually hit or miss, and people have to practice it a lot. And so, I'd be a little cautious about it, Stephen. I tend to agree with you. That's why in the cases I took to be interesting, as soon as you got over the propositional material, the stuff that had to come with it also had to be skills, knowing how to do something or other, which were not as easily set aside. So, while I am sympathetic, I think we live on probabilities most of the time. I know it's not a knock-down argument. In the George Pellew case, the G.P. case, there was so much precise, accurate information so continuously, that it seems to me that it's implausible to think that that could have been explained by psi or that it was all propositional.

ROLL: The discussion here is essentially the discussion that's been going on for about 100 years now. The type of evidence that Steve points to as necessary or that would make us turn to the survival hypothesis is the type of evidence that's been discussed for 100 years. The most recent attempts to get at this type of evidence perhaps consists in the posthumous messages, particularly the coded messages left by Thouless, Gaither Pratt, and several others. They would remember the keys to the codes and communicate them through mediums afterwards. I have very diligently attempted to get these codes from Gaither Pratt, both with psychics and with members of his family. Throughout the years with respect to this new way of getting messages from the dead as well as the previous attempts to leave posthumous codes, none of that has succeeded. I think that whole approach to the survival issue is dead. We need to get another basic hypothesis as to what exists prior to death, before we can deal with what continues afterwards. One problem is that the individuals who investigate or who produce a hypothesis about posthumous life are academic types such as ourselves whose mentation, whose identity, and whose very existence is what's going on in their heads, the rational and the structured process we call thinking. It's such a narrow perspective. We need to have psychics participate in this investigation, or we have to train ourselves to be psychics, to get a clue as to what the psyche, or the self, is before death and what the self may be afterwards. It's so difficult for us to conceive of something as simple as the idea of place memories. It's very hard for us because of our backgrounds to even consider that possibility. Yet it is what psychics do all the time.

LAWRENCE: I just want to throw something in and in some ways it's a response to something that Bill said earlier. One of the ideas that we came up with (and I don't know whether this is worth exploring or not) had to do with the patient who was "pronounced dead" and then "came back". One of the things that we know about survival with patients is that people who are in a situation where they lower the demand of oxygen can live without oxygen longer, for example, patients who are hypothermic (thrown in ice water, etc.). One of the things that we had talked about was if you thought that what was contained (and obviously this is very dualistic) in the body was some kind of energy system that put a demand on the body for an increased

metabolism, it would then increase oxygen consumption. If something really left the body, would you be able to measure a lower demand of oxygen in the body during that state? It's a little different from what you said about giving the body a rest. But it's obviously, a biophysiological approach. It would seem, then, that you should have something happening to the body if something really is leaving the body. That might be one explanation for it.

TAYLOR: As legitimate as the question appears, it would seem to me that all of the people who have ever died would have to come to the scientists to be measured, probably all at once. Everyone who was incredulous would then be able to turn to their neighbor and say, "I see it, too." Or scientists themselves would have to go and find the place where all the dead have gone. To convince those who have already come to a conclusion is almost impossible. The situation is much like the Shaker fountain on the Mountain of Zion—only the believers see the water flowing out of the rock. Even if the dead did rise and come to the scientists, the scientists wouldn't see anything out there, because I think that reincarnation does have something to do with a state of consciousness beyond the one that science is exploring.

EDGE: By the way, I think it's probably my classes where all the dead have gone!

CLOSING REMARKS

HOYT EDGE: Parapsychology or psychical research was the first empirical discipline to study the survival question. We have continued this research for over a century. During that time there has been an enormous amount of empirical and conceptual work. But even after all of this time and effort, we often have to respond, as John Palmer did, "The older we get or the more we think about this question, the more confused we get."

One thing that came out of the conference is that most people on the panel believe that we have reached a stalemate in trying to answer the question of survival. Robert Almeder seems to be the only person on the panel to be fairly convinced by the data, although he doesn't seem altogether happy about the prospect of survival. Others, like Madelaine Lawrence, were impressed by the personal reports of others and are thus concerned that we take these experiences seriously.

There has been unanimous agreement that the survival question is one of the most fundamental in life. Yet, no one has expressed much disappointment if it turns out that survival is not proven. This strikes me as a fundamental difference in philosophy of life, certainly from 100 years ago, but also perhaps even from 15 to 20 years ago.

While there is much disagreement on some matters, such as on the ontology of a survival self (Palmer suggests a dualist version while Roll offers a more monist version), if we look carefully, I think we will see that many of the panelists' views form patterns of agreement in other areas. As a way of summing up the conference, let me mention four of these patterns. Of course, these four clusters of ideas will only skim the surface. But it may be useful, nevertheless, to emphasize these points.

First, in order to break through the stalemate, a number of the participants have argued that we need to improve our understanding of various aspects of the survival question. John Palmer has urged more theory-building so that we can get conceptual clarity about alternatives. And he has offered us a dualist theory. Michael Grosso has urged us to widen our net, and seriously consider states of consciousness and experiences that may have psi components but which we ordinarily don't look at, such as transpersonal experiences and UFO experiences.

Justine Owens and Stephen Braude have advised us to examine more closely alternative explanations to survival as a way to get a clearer picture of the appropriateness of explaining certain events by survival. Owens, for instance, recommends that we need to find out more about the processing capacities of an unconscious brain and about the predictability of information gathered in OBE experiences based on normal experience. Braude argues that we need more insightful and detailed descriptions of purported reincarnation cases as well as of dissociative processes before we can be justified in believing that the data supports reincarnation.

Second, there was concern that we start our discussion of survival with the focus on the experiences of the living. Bill Roll argued that if we understand the everyday self, we see that it is relational, encompassing others and the world, being embodied and emplaced. At the death of the small self, the larger relational Self can survive, he says, in a primordial body. On the other hand, Eugene Taylor, Madelaine Lawrence, and Justine Owens focus on more extraordinary experience, the latter two on near-death experiences (although we all seem to agree that this appellation is a misnomer) and Taylor more on visionary experiences.

Third, several participants have urged us to pay more attention to the transformative effects of psi experiences. People who go through near-death experiences, Lawrence points out, tend to view death and in turn life in radically new ways. Eugene Taylor, on the other hand, believes that there has been a gross overemphasis on the scientific reductionistic methodology. And as a corrective we need to develop a psychology of inner experience which describes as sensitively as possible visionary and self-realization experiences, among others. Psi phenomena have traditionally been a by-product of these experiences.

Fourth, the old question of super-psi is still with us. There is disagreement on its usability. Robert Almeder dismisses it as being nonfalsifiable and as providing no real explanation, while Stephen Braude argues that it, or a version of it, is a useful potential explanation given the present state of the data. And Bill Roll suggests that we should perhaps not even use the term at all.

Well, let me conclude with the following observation. We have heard earlier that we can achieve progress when we reach a higher

level of confusion. I think we have reached that stage! But given the philosophical and empirical complexity of the survival question, perhaps that is all we can ask for at this time. I believe we have made progress over the last century, but there is still much work to be done in this area. Does this suggest another conference on this topic in 20 years?

LISETTE COLY: I think you really pulled a fast one, Hoyt, with that last question. If you would all come back and update your positions, I'm sure that Parapsychology Foundation would be most interested in yet another survival conference. The last two days have really flown by. Your papers and discussions have raised much food for thought and continued research on the subject. The Parapsychology Foundation thanks you all, participants and observers, who've come together and shed so much new light on our subject matter and helped to create this valuable addition to our conference series.

Now, I believe we all must thank Dr. Hoyt Edge for a job well done! It is no mean feat to moderate a conference such as ours, particularly when so much of our discussion is given over to spirited discussion. That's what it is, basically, excuse the pun. And I think this elegant summary and instant replay that Hoyt has prepared somewhat under the gun is really a marvel! We do thank you.

As we close these proceedings, I would like to share with you additional comments made by Eileen Garrett (1957) concerning survival research.

That we have the scientific mechanisms for such exploration is true. The place of applied science is recognized, but what is needed for the new communication are explorers with imagination, persistence and curiosity...There is an unspoken taboo...against discussing man's hope for life beyond death in objective terms. The scholar's disdain, the self-conscious intellectual's too-quick smile, and the minister's rolling phrases respect that taboo. They avoid rather than face the issue; they are designed to head off the unsophisticated questioner, the sincere investigator, the truly perplexed. (p. 2)

We have been most fortunate to have at this conference explorers obviously possessing imagination, persistence and curiosity. We feel

sure that the unsophisticated questioner, the sincere investigator and the truly perplexed will be well served to read of our efforts here in Boston. We wish you all a safe trip home.

Ladies and gentlemen, the 40th International Conference of the Parapsychology Foundation is adjourned.

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