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### AMBIGUITY IN THE QUESTION OF SURVIVAL

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THE question of survival after death is one which is bound to have a place of great importance in psychical research; in fact there are many who would be inclined to say that the task of finding an answer is the sole but sufficient justification for that research, and that all other matters, such as telepathy, telekinesis, etc., are psychological or psycho-physiological curiosities, important only as ancillary to the main enquiry. There has been, of course, no dearth of answers and these have ranged from uncompromising rejection, as, for example, in Professor Dodds' closely reasoned paper, "Why I do not believe in Survival",<sup>1</sup> to whole-hearted acceptance by men like Sir Oliver Lodge and Mr Drayton Thomas. Each view can claim influential support both within and without the ranks of psychical researchers.

Between the two extremes there are many different shades of opinion inclining to assess probability at more or less. There is also a considerable number of people who maintain the attitude of pure agnosticism in the matter.

A further basis of differentiation may be found in the grounds on which the varying opinions are held. Some are founded on general arguments, such as those from ethics, psychology, etc.; possibly a few on pure *a priori* reasoning, but I fancy that this is very rare nowadays; others rely mainly on special evidence, such as psychological or physiological facts, also that derived from phenomena of the type with which psychical research is specifically concerned, though most

<sup>1</sup> Part 135, Vol. XLII *Proceedings*.

would be found to combine general reasoning with empirical conclusions. Others again base their beliefs on religious grounds, alleging divine revelation of the truth.

In view of its admitted importance and of the multiplicity of the answers proposed it seems not out of place for the student of psychical research to attempt an investigation into the formulation of the question itself with a view to discovering whether there be ambiguities and tacit assumptions hidden in it. We might ask, for example, whether the concept of survival held by Professor Dodds is identical with that entertained by Mr Drayton Thomas, whether, in short, their apparently antithetical opinions refer precisely to the same thing.

It is quite likely that many of those who have taken up a definite position in the matter have accepted a formulation of the question without much antecedent criticism and in doing so have overlooked some very relevant considerations. It is the object of this paper to bring to light some, at least, of the ambiguities which lie hidden in the ordinary concept of survival and the tacit assumptions which are made when the question is formulated.

Now there are four main headings under which we can classify questions of this kind.

(1) Those questions which are unanswerable because they are, strictly speaking, unaskable. As an instance of these I would cite the familiar paradox of the irresistible force meeting the immovable object or such theological questions as "Can an omnipotent God sin?" These are, of course, very simple examples, but in all questions of this type clear definition of the terms used and full examination of the implications involved will show that no intelligible meaning can be assigned to them.

(2) There are questions which are unanswerable because the improbability of obtaining relevant evidence is so high as to amount to practical impossibility. A very simple example would be, "What will be the name of the Prime Minister of Great Britain in the year 2000 A.D.?"

(3) There are questions which are claimed to be answerable with certainty and these are of three sorts. (a) Those which are merely verbal and hence quite trivial, such as, "Are rich men wealthy?" (b) Those which are purely deductive like the theorems of mathematics. As regards these it should be observed that in the ultimate analysis mathematical certainty rests upon inference from a few axiomatic principles. It is open to anyone to deny the truth of any axiom or even the validity of the principle of inference itself. These are said to be self-evident, but whether they are so to any

individual must be a matter of individual experience. There are plenty of examples of propositions which are claimed to be self-evidently true by one philosopher yet doubted or even denied by others.

Purely logical certainty, therefore, rests on the assumption that certain fundamental principles are valid. Despite this weakness it is good enough for practical purposes in this world, though whether it would be equally satisfactory in the "world to come" is quite another question.

Whether there are any non-verbal propositions which are absolutely certain, that is to say, rest upon no antecedent assumption, has been the subject of much debate among philosophers. Kant, for example, held that there were, though his views have been disputed. The most famous example of such claims is, of course, Descartes' "Cogito ergo sum". Even this has been criticised, but it would seem that, even if not strictly true as formulated by Descartes, there is an element of truth in it.

(c) Under this heading I suppose that we should include also all such questions as are held to be answerable by Divine revelation. If one could be sure that the revelation is truly of Divine origin the certainty of the truth could hardly be higher.

(4) The last type of question is about matters of fact concerning which evidence is forthcoming or reasonably seen to be possible of attainment. The answers to such questions can never reach absolute certainty either affirmative or negative; probability is all that can be obtained and this may reach practical certainty in either direction or else attain some intermediate degree.

We must now try to see under which of these headings the question of survival, as commonly stated, comes.

*First.* It appears on the face of it that it is certainly not unaskable; most people would think that they understood clearly what was meant by the question even if they could not answer it. It is my submission, however, that the usual formulation is insufficiently precise and that it may be found that a more adequate formula discloses such ambiguities and hidden assumptions that this opinion should not be accepted without further scrutiny. It will be our task, after this preliminary examination, to attempt to construct such a formula.

*Second.* There is a wide divergence of opinion as to the possibility of finding evidence of survival. Many orthodox scientists have denied the possibility and have brushed aside the suggestion that such and such experiences are relevant. They either propose alternative explanations or meet the situation with a flat denial. Most

of those, however, who have studied the work of psychical research admit the possibility of evidence even though they may hold that nothing convincing has yet been discovered.

This is a matter in which one is bound to take sides. If one holds that no evidence is possible it is clearly a waste of time to consider the question unless, of course, *a priori* proof is considered feasible. Personally, I consider that relevant evidence is possible of acquisition, otherwise I should proceed no further with this enquiry.

*Third.* The question of survival is clearly not simply verbal, it is concerned with a matter of fact. It does not come, therefore, under the heading 3 (a).

The view that it is of type 3 (b), viz., answerable by pure deduction from first principles, though at one time widely held by philosophers, has of late dropped completely out of fashion. I doubt whether arguments such as that which strives to prove the immortality from the alleged simplicity of the soul carry any weight nowadays. They are too thin, bloodless and abstract, there is an air of unreality about them which makes them seem to be mere sophistical gymnastics. Of course, if a sound *a priori* argument for survival could be found it would give a degree of certainty far exceeding that afforded by any evidence of the kind known at present.

There is, besides the purely deductive arguments, what might be considered an intermediate type in which deduction is brought to bear on wide generalisations from experience. Examples of this type are some of the ethical arguments for survival. If there be any valid *a priori* ethical principles any argument based thereon would be, of course, purely deductive. In so far as there is an *a posteriori* element in ethics—and I imagine that this is so for far the greater and more generally accepted parts of the subject—the proposed proofs of survival, or the opposite, would be of the mixed or intermediate type.

Provided that the deductive reasoning be sound, which is a matter which should, theoretically, be susceptible of conclusive test by the canons of logics, such arguments might carry a high degree of conviction if the empirical basis could be firmly established. There is, however, so much variety of opinion and obscurity in ethics that in actual fact the ethical proof of survival has failed to secure any general acceptance.

As regards type 3 (c) I have no comments to make. This is not the place, nor am I competent, to discuss religious matters.

*Fourth.* A position, so far as concerns this paper, has already been taken as regards the existence of evidence bearing on survival. It has been admitted that relevant evidence is forthcoming, though

whether it is adequate to establish a probability of survival or the reverse and what the degree of that probability may be is not our present concern.

Subject, then, to setting at rest the doubt raised when discussing type 1, the question of survival may be classified as being of type 4. To decide concerning that doubt we must now apply ourselves to constructing a more precise formulation of the question. If such a formula can be found it should be of assistance in evaluating the evidence. There are many varieties of the common formulation, such as, for example, "If a man die shall he live again?" "Is there a life after death?" "Will my conscious existence persist after the destruction of my physical body?" ; and the answers, negative and positive, are equally varied. "Death is the end of all". "Remember while thou art, thou art but what thou shalt be—Nothing", "The soul of man is immortal", "Death is an incident in an endless life", and so on. It is clear that none of these is sufficiently precise for our purpose.

In drawing up a formula we should strive to avoid as far as possible the numerous metaphysical pitfalls with which the subject is surrounded, but complete success is unattainable ; whenever exhaustive analysis is undertaken metaphysical questions are bound to arise in spite of the loathing and contempt for metaphysics which is expressed by some orthodox scientists. It is the "King Charles' Head" of all persistent enquiry.

In order to evade those subtleties which cluster around the metaphysical concepts of substance and existence, I want to introduce a non-committal term borrowed from the vocabularies of two different schools of psychological thought. We are interested in anything only in so far as its non-existence would make a change in the situation. If it makes no difference whatsoever to anyone or anything, directly or indirectly, whether a thing exists or not, then, so far as we are concerned, that thing is non-existent. We can neglect all ideas about substance and say that a thing is the differences which it makes by being. I propose to call all these differences, both actively and passively caused, behaviour and a thing a behaviour-pattern.

Thus a man is a behaviour-pattern of a certain characteristic kind. If we prefer it, we could say that he is a substance, or combination of substances, which exhibits this characteristic behaviour-pattern, but the term "substance" is completely non-operative and tells us nothing.

I now propose a formulation of the question of survival which, I suggest, conveys the meaning which most people intend.

If there be a behaviour-pattern of that characteristic kind which is commonly called man and it undergoes the change known as physical death at a certain date in the normal time sequence, will there be, at a later date in the same time sequence, a behaviour-pattern, exhibiting a sufficient number of human characteristics to be considered a personality, which is historically continuous with that man?

Now the first point which I wish to notice is that that which survives is not identical with that which undergoes death. This must be admitted by all parties to the enquiry whatever shade of opinion they may hold, for the behaviour-pattern called man includes strands of physical behaviour, i.e. changes brought about or suffered by the body, intimately woven into the pattern, whereas the change of death, whatever else it may include, is the destruction of that body. Whether another body, either physical or non-physical, be substituted, it is unquestionable that the old familiar organism disappears and, even if there be a substitute, its characteristics are very different from those of any bodies of which we have experiential knowledge.

But a man—for the sake of brevity I will leave out the phrase “behaviour-pattern known as ”—includes what I have spoken of as a personality. This is a complex of psychical characteristics and dispositions, intellectual, volitional, emotional, mnemonic and so on. These are not directly perceptible to the physical senses, so the disappearance of the physical body is not necessarily evidence of the disappearance of the personality. It may persist yet be imperceptible.

It is at this point that we strike our first ambiguity. Suppose that we admit that it is only with the personality that the question of survival is concerned and that we understand what is meant by such phrases as “the same person”, e.g. “the postman who delivers my letters to-day is the same person as the postman who delivered them yesterday”.

Now a personality is a continuously changing complex ; even if we speak of identity we do not mean identically the same in the sense that no change has occurred. Even the physical body is subject to continuous change. Most of such changes in the personality are more or less gradual and there is no sharp break in continuity ; each phase is contiguous to, linked with and arising from the one preceding it ; together they constitute an historical whole. The sum total of these changes over a long period may be so great that there are no recognisable points of similarity between the characteristics of the earlier and later phases. Consider, for example, the difference between an infant one year old and the same man at seventy.

With sudden changes, however, the matter is not so simple : some of these, if not too widespread and cataclysmic, may cause no break in historical continuity. All changes produce effects on the personality and it cannot be doubted that the experience of a change so momentous and uprooting yet so obscure as that of physical death must bring about far-reaching modifications. The question, then, arises, "How much sudden change in the characteristics of a personality is compatible with continuity of identity?"

Consider a few cases such as might crop up during life. Suppose a man receive severe head injuries ; he recovers but has lost all memory of his life before the accident, his moral and intellectual character is much altered. Leaving the body out of account, is he the same person as before? Or is a lunatic the same person as the sane man? Was Sally the same person as Miss Beauchamp?

With physical objects we can speak of numerical identity ; the pen with which I now write is numerically identical with the pen which I used yesterday. Whether numerical identity applies to electrons, protons, etc., is another matter into which we need not enter.

But with a changing complex such as a personality the matter is not so simple. For most of the purposes of life we are assisted by the fact that the personality is manifested in or through a physical organism and questions of identity are usually settled on the basis of physical characteristics, mainly of a spatial nature, e.g. finger prints, personal appearance, etc. In the case of survival, however, all assistance from the physical is denied to us, we are compelled to fall back upon historical continuity and it so happens that the obscurity which surrounds physical death is so dense that our historical knowledge is broken off completely. Whatever opinion we may hold concerning the validity of alleged post-mortem communications through mediums or spontaneous phantasmal appearances, we are bound to admit that there is a wide gap in our knowledge, quite apart from the scrappiness of the information which such phenomena afford.

Here, then, is one ambiguity in the question of survival ; until we can get a conclusive ruling on the amount of sudden change compatible with historical continuity it seems that identity must remain a more or less open question. I can see no hope of obtaining such a ruling nor, were one available, does it appear likely that alleged post-mortem communication will ever be so full and detailed as to allow us to apply it with any confidence.

Before leaving this point I would beg leave to make one remark which may possibly be held to trench upon metaphysics. I think that at the back of our minds there is always a vague idea of identity of substance, soul-stuff, psychical atoms or what not—something in



which the manifested characteristics inhere which remains the same through all changes. This idea seems to come naturally to us, but can we, on analysis, assign any intelligible meaning to soul-stuff or psychical atoms? To arrive at it we must abstract from all characteristics, attributes and activities, everything, that is to say, which differentiates one bit of soul-stuff from another bit. If there be nothing whatsoever to differentiate one psychical atom from another, are they not identical? The last attribute from which we must abstract is the property of possessing attributes or of being that in which attributes inhere. When this is gone, what is left is indistinguishable from nothing, and what is indistinguishable from nothing is nothing, at least for all practical purposes.

Until, therefore, some intelligible meaning can be given to the terms soul-stuff, etc., the idea of survival through numerical identity of substance must be shelved.

The second, and perhaps the most important, of the ambiguities is really a development of the first. Let us consider briefly what we know about the behaviour-pattern called man. I need not enlarge upon what is now almost a truism, viz., that we know our own conscious states directly, our own bodies and the bodies of others through our conscious states, while the conscious states of others are only known, either by inference, customary association or some other indirect means. Apart from a very few psychological extremists, it is generally admitted that there are at least two parts or aspects of a human being, the physiological and the psychical; some would divide the physiological into the physical and the vital, but that does not interest us now. Even if it be held that the psychical depends for its existence entirely upon the physiological, or vice-versa, they are distinguishable aspects, there is a wide and hitherto unbridged gulf between the two types of behaviour.

It really makes very little difference which side in the controversy be adopted except that, if the extreme materialist position be held, the question of survival is rendered somewhat more complicated. Extreme materialism does not logically entail the denial of survival, for it is possible that a substitute for the ordinary physical body may be provided at death, that is to say, there may be an astral or some form of non-physical organism or even one made of ordinary physical matter in a state which is imperceptible to our normal senses. I do not know, however, of any reliable evidence on this point.

On the other hand, even if it be believed that the physical body as well as all other matter is dependent for its existence on the psychical, this does not logically entail survival. It might, perhaps, be said



that this matter which the mind constructs is so good an imitation of the real thing that it does quite as well, only, of course, there is no real matter of which it is an imitation. It is the only sort of matter that there is, it behaves in the fashion which we call material, so we may as well be satisfied with it. The important thing is that we have no knowledge of the pure psychical apart from the physical. We have direct experience of our own minds and indirect experience of the minds of others, but all the minds which we ever come across, our own included, are psycho-physical entities. The most intimate knowledge to which we can ever attain of our own conscious states is mediated through our brains. In the case of telepathy, even if the impression be received directly from another mind, it must rise to our normal consciousness before we can become aware of it and normal consciousness functions through our brains.

To acquire knowledge of the pure psychical we should have to step outside of our bodies and then somehow manage to smuggle the information through the brain when we return. It would have to be translated into the terms available to us as psycho-physical beings and it is doubtful whether any such terms are suitable. If one studies the writings of those mystics who claim to have experienced ecstasy one can see how unsuccessfully they struggle to communicate the incommunicable.

The fact is that the mind is a joint affair of the psychical and the physical; we cannot form the remotest idea of what the pure psychical, if it exist, may be like, seeing that we never have experiential knowledge of it. For all we know it may be totally diverse from mind in all its major characteristics; we do not know, even, whether it is conscious in the sense in which we speak of consciousness. I might remark in passing that I believe that we are equally ignorant of pure "brute" matter, but that is another story.

If we try to form an idea of the pure psychical by analysing mental phenomena and abstracting from the clearly material factors therein, we are met with apparently insuperable obstacles. In the first place we do not know the mode of combination, whether it be analogous to a mixture or a chemical compound or whether mind be emergent from psycho-physical interaction. If it be either of the two latter modes analysis will not provide the required knowledge; we cannot discover the properties of sodium by simply meditating on those of common salt, though actual physical analysis would enable us to do so. We can perform an analogous separation of the elements in man by killing him, but in doing so we always find that the psychical element which we wish to investigate escapes. The whole essence of the concept of emergence is that one cannot predict the characteristics

of the product from those of its elements; there is no logical pathway between them.

It remains therefore to be seen whether the idea of simple mixture is tenable. In a simple mixture each element continues to manifest its own proper characteristics independently of the rest and the character of the whole is just the sum of those characteristics. Now on this point we are able to produce a large amount of first-class evidence. There can be no question that the state of the body and events happening in or to it have profound effects on the mind. Fatigue, illness, malnutrition, drugs may produce far-reaching changes in the mental state. Injury to the brain may bring about a radical alteration in the moral and intellectual character. A disturbance of the proper functioning of the endocrine glands may have a similar result. Climate is another factor which, acting upon the body, has an influence on the mind. These facts are so well known that it is not necessary to illustrate them with examples. I maintain that it is incompatible with the above and many other similar facts that the mode of combination between the psychical and physical elements in the mind should be one of simple mixture.

Take the case of a man who undergoes severe moral deterioration through prolonged indulgence in narcotic drugs. Is it conceivable that any analysis of our knowledge of the chemical properties of the drug, the physiological characteristics of the body and the interactions between them will permit us to dissect out of our knowledge of the mind those parts which are purely psychical? Moreover there is a further difficulty. We cannot say how far psychological causes have combined with physiological in producing the effect. For example, it might be that had the subject exercised greater self-control the deterioration might have been delayed or lessened though the amount of the drug taken remained the same.

It seems to me to be clear that the mode of combination of the factors which go to make up the mind as we know it is such that no analysis will afford us knowledge of the nature of the pure elements, nor can I see how, apart from such analysis, that knowledge can be obtained.

If the neutral form of monistic hypothesis be held we are in no better position. The physical and the psychical are different aspects or functions of the same thing. What we call matter is just this unknown thing, X, behaving in a certain fashion; when X behaves in another manner we call it psychical. We can therefore substitute for the term "physical" in the foregoing argument the phrase "X in its physical aspect" or "X behaving as matter" and similarly for

the psychical. I cannot see that it will affect the conclusion. As regards the other forms of monism, the materialist holds that the psychical depends for its existence on the physical. As already noted, if there be survival the upholders of this hypothesis must provide a material substitute for the body. We have no idea of what this substitute could be nor, in consequence, what the surviving entity would be like. Psychical monism, on the other hand, teaches that the physical depends for its existence on the psychical or, as it is sometimes put, matter is a mental construct. But even if this be so it cannot be denied that a mentally constructed body is the invariable companion of any mind which we encounter and that it exercises a profound effect on mental phenomena, so that the argument given above still holds good. The disappearance of a mentally constructed body would produce just as much effect as would the destruction of a material body.

We are faced, then, with this position. If there be survival we have no knowledge of the nature and characteristics of that which survives. It is admitted that the psycho-physical complex is broken up and that the physical elements disappear. What is left may be something like a mind or human personality or it may not, we are quite ignorant on the matter except that it would appear that, whatever it is, it will no longer be subject to the influences, profound and far-reaching as they are, which the body now exercises. There seems to be only one hypothesis which would enable us to escape from this conclusion, viz., that there is a substitute for the physical body after death and that this substitute, while it is non-physical in nature, or else composed of matter in a form imperceptible to our normal senses, yet exercises precisely the same set of influences as the physical body which has been discarded.

It is, no doubt, logically possible that such a substitute organism might exist, but it would have to be made, to say the least, of very queer stuff. It would be deprived of all the ordinary physical characteristics of matter, those, that is to say, which are sensibly perceptible, yet it would retain the property of reacting with the psychical, and thereby producing mental phenomena, which property in ordinary matter is, presumably, derived from those physical characteristics. On the face of it, it would seem that the efficacy of adrenalin is derived from its chemical constitution, which is a physical characteristic. The substitute adrenalin, however, lacks this chemical constitution, yet it has precisely the same effect in mental phenomena.

I do not know whether a slightly more plausible form of the hypothesis could be constructed on the supposition that the substitute

organism is already there in life ; that is to say, that there is a non-physical replica of the physical intimately interwoven with it ; each cell, even each atom, has its etheric, astral or what not double, a sort of shadow which always accompanies it. It might then be supposed, either that the physical cell and its replica act together in double harness during life and that after death the replica carries on single-handed, or else that it is the replica organism alone that interacts with the psychical so that the removal at death of the physical organism does not affect the situation. I am aware that this sounds highly fantastic but I believe that some such doctrine is taught by the Theosophists. But there are, as it seems to me, grave difficulties in the way of any form of substitute hypothesis. For example, suppose a man dies of cancer : before his death the cancer was a part of his physical organism and there was, therefore, on the hypothesis, an etheric replica of it ; after death this replica will form part of the substitute organism and will, presumably, continue to produce its effects as before, that is to say, will act as a disruptive agency. Are we to suppose that the substitute organism is subject to decay and death and, if so, is a second substitute provided?

From the little that I remember of the Theosophist doctrines, I believe that they teach that there are seven different bodies, but I cannot see why the number should be limited to seven or at all. If the substitute organism comes into existence at or after death, either it is an exact replica or it is not ; in the first case it would include all the defects, such as the cancer, of the physical body, in the second, it is difficult to see how it can produce precisely the same effects in interaction with the psychical. Though it is a quite irrelevant consideration, it seems to me a most gloomy prospect if we have to look forward to carrying over into another life all the tiresome and painful defects of our present physical bodies. The hypothesis of a substitute organism is not, as above remarked, logically impossible, but it does not seem, on examination, to be very plausible, nor is there, so far as I know, any reliable evidence in support of it. Personally I should hesitate to put it forward in any form as a serious suggestion for fear of incurring a stroke from Occam's razor.

There is a further important point to be considered. Not only is the "me which I now recognise as myself" and which other people know as "me" a psycho-physical entity, but it is only a fragment of the total "me". There is a vast range of psychical territory which is unknown to the normal consciousness ; some of it can be partially explored by suitable technique, such as hypnosis, psycho-analysis, etc., but we have evidence that there lies beyond this a hinterland which is permanently inaccessible. It may be that

these frontiers are maintained after death, but we do not know. It seems probable that could the whole territory be unified under one control and normal consciousness extended to cover the entire range of the subliminal, the result would be something very different from any mind of which we can form an imagination.

It may, perhaps, be said that the evidence derived from mediumistic communications is sufficient to dispel this ambiguity and that the character of the ostensible communicator is sufficiently manifested and is, in good cases, clearly continuous with that of the deceased person who purports to be present. Now I question whether the conditions of trance mediumship can ever permit so clear and complete a delineation of character as is here required. Where a control is interposed between the ostensible communicator and the medium, as is most usually the case, the sitter gets his account at third hand, that is, assuming that the control can be differentiated from the medium. While expressing no opinion as to whether direct voice be a bona-fide phenomenon or not, I am pretty sure that, even if it does occasionally occur, it is a very brief and fugitive manifestation and does not carry on long conversations like Feda and other controls.

The indications of character seem to come, if at all, in short flashes, momentary glimpses when we can say "that is exactly like so and so". We have to build up the picture out of small pieces and I fancy that in doing so we are liable to draw largely on our imagination.

It must be remembered too that the medium is a psycho-physical organism and that we have no knowledge of the mode of her connection with the source of the information, whatever that may be. It is possible that, as Professor Broad has suggested, there is a temporary combination between the medium's organism and some persisting fragments of the psychic factor which was once part of a living man, as a result of which what he calls a "mindkin" is formed. Alternatively we might suppose that the source of the information is the entire psychic factor which persists after death as an unknown and possibly inconceivable psychical entity and that the effect of combination with a medium is that it is presented in the guise of a mind. Perhaps I can make this clearer by the use of symbols. Let B stand for the body and brain of the medium, P for her psychical element, the resultant of their combination is M, her mind. Normal changes in B and P result in changes in M. We know something about B and M from experience, but we know nothing about P except what we can infer from changes in M. Suppose now that there is an entity which once occupied a position similar to that of P in another human being but is now separated from its body—call it

X. In some unknown fashion X produces changes in P so that it becomes  $P^x$ , then the resultant of the combination with B, the medium's body, is  $M^x$ . Clearly  $M^x$  will be different in its characteristics from the mind of which X was the psychical element when alive and it may well be that this accounts sufficiently for the unsatisfactory nature of mediumistic communications, for the many gaps in memory, the inconsistencies and contradictions. The main difference between this theory and that of Professor Broad is that in the latter it is only mnemonic fragments which persist after death, bits of debris, as it were, from a demolished building which are temporarily used to form part of a new structure, while in the former it is the entire psychical element which survives.

When I reflect upon the cases of alleged communication from the dead through mediums I get a general impression of unskilful and ill-informed impersonation, rather clumsy and stupid in an odd dreamlike fashion, but punctuated here and there with brilliant flashes of verisimilitude. There are a few notable exceptions, e.g. in Mrs. Willett's mediumship, but as a rule the average level is low and I cannot help feeling that if the alleged communicators were really the minds of the deceased, as they were in life, a very much more convincing show would be put up and blunders, though probable, would not be of the sort which actually occur.

To summarise this discussion, I submit that we have no knowledge of the nature and characteristics of a pure psychical entity except that it is capable of forming a mind when combined with or acting in conjunction with a suitable physical organism. We have experiential knowledge, both direct and indirect, of minds and much evidence to show that they are profoundly affected by the characteristics of and changes in the body. These influences are removed at death unless some extreme form of the substitute body hypothesis be correct. It seems to me to follow that that which survives, if there be survival, is probably very different from the "me which I now recognise as myself"; it may not be anything like that which we now know as a mind or personality. I fancy that most people when putting the question of survival refer to the mind, consciousness or personality as known in this life, what I have called the "me which I now recognise as myself", and have in their minds the idea of the continued existence in different circumstances of a substantially identical and similar personality. Those who are acquainted with the facts of subliminal mental activity may hold some opinion as to its status in those circumstances, but I think that a continuance of the stream of conscious experience owned by the deceased is held to be of the very essence of survival.



I turn now to consider very briefly some of the other ambiguities which seem to me to be inseparable from the question of survival. These are of a more metaphysical nature and concern mainly the factor of time. In the formula which I proposed I spoke of dates in the normal time sequence. I think that we all know what we mean by dates and earlier and later. The assumptions which we make are that the time-sequence is uni-dimensional and that there is an irreversible direction of change—what Eddington calls “time’s arrow”. These assumptions are justified in ordinary experience though anomalies do crop up when analysis is pushed to its limit, also in certain supernormal phenomena, such as precognition. But the question arises, “Are we justified in carrying over these assumptions into a realm of existence of which we have no direct experiential knowledge?” There is no logical necessity for time to be uni-dimensional or its arrow irreversible; we may be unable to imagine any other state of affairs, but our incapacities cannot lay down limits to the cosmos. Moreover, even were we able to construct an impeccable logical proof, we should still have to prove that the laws of logic hold sway over this unexplored region.

The last thirty years of physics should be enough to show that time is not so simple as appears on the surface; we know very little about it, yet enough for us to be almost certain that the old naïve ideas were wrong. There is, besides, some evidence which points in the same direction, viz., supernormal precognition. However we try to explain this, or even if we are content to leave it unexplained, it seems clear that an uni-dimensional sequence of point-instants with an irreversible arrow will not fit in to the picture.

As regards space, it seems probable that if a pure psychical entity be subject to spatial conditions at all, they are very different from our familiar, three-dimensional system. Clairvoyance and other supernormal phenomena might be cited as evidence in support of this. Anyhow, space and time appear, according to present-day ideas, to be so closely linked together that a modification of one would reasonably be expected to entail a modification of the other. Of course it may be that space and time as we know them may govern the pure psychical world and that the apparent anomalies are due to some unsuspected cause, but I do not think that this is a plausible suggestion. However, until the point is cleared up, there is bound to be some ambiguity in the question of survival.

Finally, it is a pure assumption that any of the familiar categories, causation, number, etc., can be extrapolated from the psychophysical world. As already pointed out, we do not know whether the laws of logic have any jurisdiction beyond the frontiers of our



own world. It has been suggested that the phenomena of telepathy may best be explained on the hypothesis of a common subliminal or a cosmic consciousness, in which case the apparent unity of the individual is not absolute. The "one" and the "many" may be not incompatible. We have no language suitable for dealing with such ideas, nor does it seem likely that we can find any. It may be that survival and the conditions thereof are completely undescrivable.

I suggest, then, that the only question which we can intelligibly put concerning survival is, "Does physical death entail the complete destruction of the psychical element which is a factor in our minds, an element of which we have no knowledge in its pure state?" I think that this question *can* be asked and does not, therefore, come under Class I. I think, also, that there is some evidence relevant to the matter, so that it may properly be put into Class IV. Whether that evidence is sufficient to establish a probability one way or the other, and what is the degree of that probability, must, it would seem, be a matter of personal opinion. For myself, I hold provisionally that there is evidence enough to establish a moderate probability that physical death does not always entail complete destruction of the psychical element, though it may sometimes do so, but that, although we have no knowledge of what that element is like in its pure state, there is a high probability that the "me which I now recognise as myself" will not survive.

## IS PROOF OF SURVIVAL POSSIBLE?

BY B. ABDY COLLINS

THIS is the title of a paper of about 8000 words read by Mr Saltmarsh at a private meeting of the Society in October 1931 and printed in the *Proceedings* (Part 122, Vol. XL). The object of the paper was to inquire "how far any type of evidence dealt with in psychic research can afford proof of survival of human personality, if it were found in an ideally perfect form?" It was to be supposed that there was "an example of each type of phenomenon so well established from the evidential point of view, so clean cut and free from embarrassing complications, that no question as to the facts can be raised". The conclusion to which Mr Saltmarsh eventually came was "that no logical proof of survival is at present possible from the evidence studied by psychical research", though he did not wish to say it never would be.

To this paper Sir Oliver Lodge made a brief rejoinder and in about 300 words laid down the thesis that the existence of a spiritual world was established and the main difficulty was to prove personal identity in connection with such a world. Mr Saltmarsh replied that he agreed that sufficient evidence was available to justify the acceptance as a sound working hypothesis of the existence of a spiritual world. He also outlined a type of case which, if established, would convince him personally of the truth of survival. In these circumstances it might be thought that it was hardly worth while to discuss Mr Saltmarsh's paper any further. But there it is on record as a serious contribution to psychical research. It appears to have been accepted by the Society without protest as a sober statement of fact and as throwing some light on the subject with which it deals, although, as I shall hope to show, it is rather an example of how not to approach the subject and not free from fallacies and special pleading. I have therefore thought it advisable to examine it at a little length.

In the first place, Mr Saltmarsh appears to assume that if survival is ever to be established to the satisfaction of reasonable men it will be by one case in which "the probability of the hypothesis alternative to survival was obviously and incontestably so infinitesimally minute that the unlikeliness of any of these hypotheses being correct

could only be overcome by absolute disproof of survival", which he says is not forthcoming. This is not one sentence extracted from a long paper. The whole argument is continually directed on the same lines. His mathematical calculations of probability are made mainly on this basis and he never once throughout the paper tries to look at all the various phenomena which have been brought forward as evidence of survival as a whole. In other words Mr Saltmarsh looks on psychical research as a hunt for the crucial case and not as an attempt to find an hypothesis or hypotheses to explain all the different types of phenomena which form the normal field of inquiry.

This I suggest is his cardinal error. I agree with him to this extent that it is so extremely unlikely as to be virtually impossible that survival will be established to general satisfaction in this way. As long ago as 1894, writing in the *Proceedings* of that year, Sir Oliver Lodge said: "It seems to me probable that in this department of science, as in every other, the wholesome and valuable part of scepticism will ultimately be broken down, if at all, not by any one crucial experiment but by converging lines of testimony coming from many and unexpected quarters". In other words, if the hypothesis of survival is to win general acceptance, it must be tested by every means possible and only if it fits all the different kinds of facts which are established will it gain sufficient strength to overcome opposition. To proceed as Mr Saltmarsh does is clean contrary to the methods of science, history, law and indeed every line of enquiry in which "proof" of fact is in question. That a paper on these lines should have been accepted and placed on record in our proceedings practically without protest seems to me most surprising.

It might be argued that Mr Saltmarsh did consider "first, whether any combination of the various types of phenomena would afford more conclusive evidence than when taken separately; second, the faggot theory". It will be found however that the first of these is only meant to cover the combination of two types of phenomena in one case, e.g., where a medium is able "to give information known to have been in the possession of a deceased person and verifiable only by a complex series of linkages, and at the same time to reproduce the psychological and perhaps some of the physical characteristics of the same deceased person".

The faggot theory is that "while an isolated case may afford but slender support for the survival theory, the whole bulk of cases taken together supplies evidence of almost irresistible strength". At first sight this might seem to be an attempt to approach the subject as a whole (though the use of the word faggot arouses suspicions at once), but an examination of the mathematical argument

which follows shows that Mr Saltmarsh is thinking throughout of a number of different cases of more or less the same type but differing in detail. For instance, he starts by saying, "The accumulation of masses of evidence is desirable for the purpose of establishing the existence of the phenomena, but it does not help in the interpretation *when it is all of the same kind*" (my italics). His examples too all refer to "cases of supernormal information" and nothing else, and he only examines this possibility as an afterthought and gives it very little space. Even so, he does arrive at the conclusion that "the increase of the number of cases may, if they are all different, largely increase the strength of the evidence for survival".

However, he only considers this aspect of the case in a very abstract way, as a mathematical exercise in the laws of probability. He never proceeds to any concrete application, dismisses the whole subject as of no value, because he is unable to put definite estimates on the various probabilities involved (!) and at once returns to his pursuit of the crucial case.

Mr Saltmarsh, after a discussion of the meaning of proof, commences his paper by dividing up the phenomena into physical and mental, and proving to his satisfaction that physical phenomena are of no value as evidence of survival. Later, he discusses "certain spontaneous phenomena". Presumably they are to be classed as mental, but it is not quite clear. Anyway, this wholesale writing-off of physical phenomena seems to me fallacious. Mr Saltmarsh says that "in order that events of this kind should have any value, they must possess some characteristic which will connect them with some deceased person". On this ground he dismisses phenomena such as levitation. This type of argument seems to me superficial. It is also, as it were, an attempt to defeat the "enemy" in detail. The value of levitation seems to me to be that it suggests that there is something beyond the world of sense and matter, something unknown to science and "contrary to the laws of nature". It shows that the materialists have not yet explained life and there are powers and forces at work which must still be described as mysterious. It makes the idea of another "unseen" world less "antecedently improbable".

Let us go a step further and take a rather more complicated case still unconnected with any known deceased person. A medium is tied to a chair, his coat is sewn up in front and both his hands are held. The coat is then somehow removed from his body without being in any way torn or dismembered and subsequently replaced under the same conditions. In the case of mere levitation we might suppose that the medium's conscious or unconscious mind, using some

force or some unseen projection at his command, pushes a chair or table up from below in the manner described by Dr Crawford.<sup>1</sup> It is a "miracle" perhaps, but quite intelligible to the human mind. But the removal of the coat requires a knowledge more than human. We cannot grasp the possibility or method of it. To talk about the fourth dimension means nothing, except that we do not know how it is done. We have to posit some other intelligence than that of the medium to account for it. The same may be said of apports (e.g. such as are alleged to have occurred at Millesimo Castle). Here we have direct evidence of an intelligence greater or at least other than human directing mundane events. Survival becomes still less "antecedently improbable", I think, when we find extra human forces and minds existing. At least, we can no longer explain the world on a naturalistic basis.

Mr Saltmarsh then discusses handwriting, produced either direct or through the medium, which is recognised as identical with that of the deceased (cases are alleged to have occurred in which handwriting experts have declared specimens of pre-death writing and writing by a medium to be identical), and direct voice which is recognised as that of a deceased person.<sup>2</sup> Mr Saltmarsh argues that a man doesn't know how he writes as he does and so would find it difficult to produce a facsimile of it after death, especially as he has to work through somebody else's hand and arm. The first part of the argument is the most curious I have come across yet in that parade of whimsicalities miscalled psychical research. If a man writes without thinking how he does it during life, why should he not do the same direct after death or influence the medium to do it? Our law of evidence takes it for granted that if one specimen of handwriting is proved to be exactly the same as another or to resemble it in certain essential characteristics, it is strong *prima facie* evidence that they are both written by the same person. If the *post mortem* specimen is a facsimile of those written before death or is recognised by experts as being by the same person, then it is not unreasonable to say that it is more likely to be due to the influence of the deceased rather than of somebody else, especially when it purports to be so written. To say that it is no evidence of identity because we do not know exactly how it is done is contrary to reason and experience. It is not crucial proof, it is true, but it may be part of the chain, especially if the content of the message is evidential. Further, the evidence cannot be rejected on the ground that we do

<sup>1</sup> "The Psychic Structures at the Golligher Circle," W. J. Crawford (Watkins).

<sup>2</sup> e.g. as described in "Modern Psychic Mysteries," by Hack (Rider & Co.).

not understand the process, because we knew that living communicators unconsciously influencing automatists at a distance (*e.g.* Mr W. T. Stead, see S.P.R. Proceedings, Vol. IX) have caused script to be written in their own handwriting.

The same applies to direct voice recognised as that of a deceased person. I do not know how I produce my voice and might not even recognise it on hearing it on a gramophone record, as Mr. Saltmarsh suggests, but it is I who produce it during life and so "I" am the most likely person to influence its production after death, especially if "I" talk in the same style and manner as I talked when alive and produce evidence of identity. To argue that the fact of direct voice with reproduction of correct tone does not add to the weight of evidence is contrary to human reason and experience. Proof of identity is one of the commonest issues in a court of law. If a counsel argued that recognition of a voice was of no value as proof of identity, he would expose himself to ridicule.

Now for the final stage of materialisation. For nearly 2000 years the facts of the Resurrection as recorded in the gospels were considered proof of survival after death. Belief in these records has waned because the historical evidence is considered unsatisfactory and the whole thing to be "contrary to the laws of nature". Now, in effect, Mr Saltmarsh says that even if all the facts are correct, they are no evidence of a future life. If, sitting in a locked room, I see a deceased relative suddenly appear, I touch him and find him solid, we converse together on intimate subjects, he tells me how he found himself "alive" after death and he eventually disappears, does Mr Saltmarsh contend that this is of no value as evidence of survival? It is beside the point to say that he knows of no such clear case. There are a number of alleged cases and we are assuming that there are satisfactory cases of all kinds. Mr Saltmarsh assumes that the medium has the power to produce teleplasm in the form of faces, "for she actually does so". What scorn the sceptic would pour on a "survivalist", if he made a statement of this kind? The faces are formed *in the presence of the medium* and partially at any rate it seems from her substance, but why say that he or she actually forms them? There is no evidence whatever for such a statement. No: the appearance in a sealed room or under conditions that preclude impersonation of a figure that is identical in looks and behaviour with a deceased person, which talks and gives proof of identity and then vanishes, would afford as good evidence as any procurable.

The more common phenomenon of a similar figure claiming to be someone who lived in the past (*e.g.* Katie King) but unrecognised

and giving no proofs of identity is less convincing but still striking evidence. I will not follow Mr Saltmarsh into all his arguments about reproductions. Writing, voice, forms—all are reproductions. So are gramophone records and broadcasts. The only question is, who made them? To dismiss these phenomena as unworthy even of consideration is an example of that unreality which tends to pervade psychical research.

So much for physical phenomena and their bearing on survival. Mental phenomena need less notice. Mr Saltmarsh admits that they do provide evidence, but he takes them in detail and for each suggests some possible, or as some would say impossible, or at least fantastical, explanation, which he suggests might "explain" it on materialist lines. A good example of his method of detail will be found in his brief mention of cross correspondences. He says they "can only afford evidence of a source extraneous to one of the mediums employed and perhaps of a definite purpose of plan" . . . "There is nothing to indicate whether this mind is embodied or disembodied. It may, of course, be that the matter of the message gives a clue to the identity of the author, but this has nothing to do with the cross correspondence as such." Well, the most striking thing about some, if not most, of the best cross correspondence cases is that they do afford evidence of certain minds (e.g. of those of Dr Verrall and Prof. Butcher) which would be just those most likely to have devised ingenious tests of this kind full of classical allusions. The content of the messages and the method are so woven together that they can only be considered together. To speak of one without the other is to carry the analytical or laboratory method to the point of absurdity. Yet this is a not unfair though perhaps extreme example of Mr Saltmarsh's pursuit of the crucial case.

One other criticism I have to make on this part of the paper, and in making it I realise that I am criticising many of those who play a prominent part in psychical research. It is the habit of carrying to extreme the invention of fantastical hypotheses or "theoretical explanations" to avoid the adoption of the obvious, if scientifically incredible, one. These mental exercises are often admitted to be unsupported by any evidence and mere "theoretical" possibilities, but it is contended that so long as such possibilities can be figured out by the ingenuity of the human mind, evidence which appears to point to survival cannot carry conviction to the impartial critic. I imagine that the origin of this practice is the perfectly sound scientific position that every alternative hypothesis must be examined and proved not to be tenable before the one selected as a working basis can be adopted. But in the sciences hypotheses are not



put forward without some evidence to support them. In psychic research it has become the fashion to place no bounds on the imagination. There was, I think, something to be said for allowing a good deal of latitude in this case, but I submit that now all reasonable limits are exceeded.

A good example of this is to be found in Mr Saltmarsh's paper. He says "the possibility of information consciously known to no one living" (e.g. about the existence and position of a will) "having been conveyed telepathically by the deceased person prior to his death to some other person, possibly the sitter, in whose subconscious mind it has lain latent until drawn therefrom by the medium. . . . In such cases as that known as the Chaffin Will case this alternative must be considered". Why should a theory of this kind unsupported by evidence of any kind be considered? To anyone who is cognisant of the facts of the case (see Vol. XXXVI, p. 517, S.P.R. *Proceedings*) the suggestion will seem fantastic.

In 1919 James Chaffin made a second will. It was a holograph will, written entirely in his own hand, and so according to the law of S. California, where he lived, valid if the handwriting was admitted or proved. In 1921, he died as the result of a fall without regaining consciousness. No one knew of the existence of a second will and probate was granted to a will executed by him in 1905. In 1925 his second son began to have dreams or visions of his father and eventually the old man appeared at his bedside and pulling aside the flap of an old black overcoat he was wearing said, "You will find my will in my overcoat pocket". Search was made, and sewn up in the lining of this old coat was found a piece of paper with directions to look at a certain chapter of the old family bible, where the will was found. All these facts were proved and acted on in a court of law.

Now, if we are to apply Mr Saltmarsh's "theory", we have to suppose (for there was no medium to "draw" the information from the son's subconscious mind) :

- (1) that the father some time between 1919 and 1921 unconsciously impressed the idea that the will was in his overcoat pocket on his son's subconscious mind,
- (2) that it remained latent for from four to six years,
- (3) that it then emerged for some reason unknown and, although it was incorrect, by chance it led to discovery of the will.

Is such a "theory" even theoretically sensible? There is no evidence that any person can unconsciously impress the subconscious mind of any other person with knowledge which does not at

once or at any rate very quickly emerge into his consciousness. There are one or two cases on record of impressions which may have remained latent for a few hours (e.g. Vol. VII, p. 33, S.P.R. *Proceedings*) but a latency extending over four years is simply a figment of the imagination and nothing else. Why should any serious attention be paid to a suggestion of this kind? On the other hand, there was every reason why James Chaffin, if he still existed, should desire to remedy the gross injustice done by his first will. I submit that theories of this type are of no value whatever.

As for endowing the subconscious theoretically with omniscience, there are several ways in which its powers can be tested on living persons. Dr Osty carried out valuable researches in this direction in his book translated into English under the title "Supernormal Faculties in Man" and Prof. Bozzano has discussed the whole subject with much learning in his "Discarnate Influence in Human Life". I have dealt with the matter at length in an article which appears in the current issue of *Psychic Science* and made certain suggestions as to how the powers of the subconscious may be further investigated. Here I will only say that that this search for theoretical fantasies in each individual case or type of case seems to be the wrong method of approach.

I might add that psychometry affords a valuable means of testing the theory that information unknown to living persons comes somehow from the mind of the deceased. The "object" in such experiments must be somehow associated with a person regarding whom information is required. In this way information can be obtained about a living person to whom it belongs or who has frequently handled it. It will be found that it is not possible in this way to obtain information about a third person except in so far as it directly affects the life of the person associated with the object. The object, according to the best conducted experiments, merely acts in some way as a means of getting into rapport with the latter. When therefore by this means we obtain information about a deceased person through an object belonging to him, it cannot be supposed that the medium obtained it through the mind of a third person. The so-called "Lerasle" case is a good example of this "dilemma", as the sceptics call it. If any one wishes to upset this conclusion, I suggest he cannot do it merely by putting forward theories entirely unsupported by evidence. His proper course is to experiment with living persons by means of psychometry and show that casual information about incidents in the life of an individual other than the person associated with the object—an individual unknown to the medium or any other person present—can be obtained in this

way. Psychometry thus affords a good means of testing the powers of the subconscious.

It remains to say a few words about Mr Saltmarsh's treatment of "spontaneous cases". He started by saying that he was going to suppose that there was a well established phenomenon of each type. In discussing deathbed visions he attempts to detract from their strength by suggesting—quite contrary to the facts—that there is no such satisfactory example. He also makes the strange criticism that they are due to the widespread expectation that they will occur and assumes that when dying a person is in a highly suggestible state. So far as my experience goes, the exact opposite is the truth in both cases. Anyhow, how, we may ask, did the widespread expectation arise? All this sort of special pleading is hardly in the true scientific spirit. At any rate, Mr Saltmarsh has only to study a collection of cases such as Sir William Barrett's "Deathbed Visions" to see that his theory will not hold. Again he says, "Were a perfectly satisfactory poltergeist case to occur?" thereby implying that no such case has ever occurred. Of course I do not know what Mr Saltmarsh means by satisfactory, but I should have thought that there was no type of spontaneous case for which so much good evidence existed. Higher up he says, "There is not one jot of reliable evidence of etheric doubles and to create (!) *ad hoc* an entirely new type of entity solely for the purpose of bolstering up an otherwise wobbly hypothesis is logically inadmissible". Anyhow, he started by assuming that such cases were on record and I submit that it is he who is trying here and there to bolster up his arguments by casting doubt on the assumed facts. I can imagine how the reigning critics of the Society would have trounced anyone supporting the hypothesis of survival, if he had dared to argue on these lines. I will not repeat the rather unkind remarks recently made about myself.

Having now criticised some details of Mr Saltmarsh's paper, I will go on to consider it as a whole. I have already pointed out that the hunt for the crucial case is the wrong method of approach and quoted some remarks of Sir Oliver Lodge indicating the right one. In his brief rejoinder to Mr Saltmarsh, Sir Oliver summed up in a sentence the scientific method: "What we need in science is a working hypothesis that we can test, getting results from it that we can verify, until ultimately its probability becomes so great that we have confidence in it as an approach to certainty." This is the way that the hypothesis of evolution has been more or less generally adopted and the various theories such as natural selection which have been advanced to account for it have been tested. Anatomy,

embryology, palaeontology, botany and zoology—every study and fact which could throw light on the matter has been carefully pursued and the hypothesis tested at every possible stage and from every possible angle. Here and there facts still difficult to explain emerge and even some that might be held to point to contrary conclusions. The segregation of species, the beginnings of life, consciousness and mind are all as yet unexplained. Yet the mass of facts pointing to evolution as having occurred is so great that the hypothesis is now almost universally accepted. Attention is now focussed on explaining those aspects of it which cause difficulty. No one ever tried to find some crucial fact which by itself would have proved the truth of evolution.

This, I submit, is the proper method to adopt in considering survival. Whether one actually adopts it as a working hypothesis or not is beside the point. To study the matter requires a consideration and sifting of *all* the relevant facts. Sir Oliver Lodge and other well known persons of learning considered there is ample evidence to warrant the adoption of survival as a working hypothesis. Others such as Richet and Osty did not, but they too thought it necessary to suggest some theory that would cover all or most of the facts. In its simplest form the survival hypothesis might be stated as follows : Man consists of body, soul and spirit or at any rate of body and soul. At death the soul leaves the body, which perishes, and the soul continues its existence in another "world". Character and memory persist and communication with the departed is possible. The proper way to test this hypothesis is surely to examine the evidence adduced at each stage of the alleged progress of the soul and to see whether it reasonably supports the hypothesis and what facts there are that may be brought against it.

The first stage is during life in this world. Mr Saltmarsh devotes one short paragraph only to it in which he dismisses phantasms of the living as having "little or no direct bearing on the question of survival". This shows a curious lack of appreciation of the facts of the case. If man survives death, he is something more than flesh and blood and any fact which can be cited as evidence of the existence of a soul or etheric body is of importance. On the other hand, if it could be proved beyond doubt that he is a mere animal, it would tell very strongly against the survival hypothesis. To try to consider the case for survival after death without examining the period of life is surely the very antithesis of the scientific method. Indeed, there is good reason for believing, as Prof. Bozzano does, that if science ever accepts survival as an hypothesis or ceases to oppose it, it will be because physiologists and psychologists are persuaded

of the truth of animism rather than because they consider it proved by communication from the beyond. In other words, one of the first and most important steps will be to break down the case which they believe to be irrefutably established by the facts of physiology.

Like Mr Saltmarsh at this stage I shall assume that there is an example of each type of phenomenon "so well established . . . that no question as to the facts can be raised". To begin with, telepathy and clairvoyance, as is fairly generally recognised, show that man can obtain knowledge otherwise than through the channels of the five senses. Hypnosis too provides evidence that in some way he can observe or be aware of things happening at a distance. Suitable subjects such as Ossowiecki are able to read sealed messages. All this supports the theory that man is something more than his mere physical body. Spiritual healing and especially "absent healing" of those unconscious of any effort to help them supports this theory. Bilocation, whether spontaneous or purposive, is evidence that man does possess an etheric body. Cases such as that of Mrs Wilmot (S.P.R. *Proceedings*, Vol. VII, pp. 41-8) cannot be explained, as some explain them, as "non factual images and impressions of bodily location". "Astral projection" is also clear evidence of the existence of a soul body, which can be separated from the physical body during life. There is other evidence, but I will leave this stage for the present. I will only remark that it is strange that some of the leading members of the Society devote so much time and energy to the establishment of telepathy and clairvoyance, highly significant but relatively unconvincing phenomena, and neglect altogether the opportunities that exist for experimenting with astral projection, absent healing and the like.

The next stage is death. If the hypothesis is correct, the soul leaves the body at this point and there should be some evidence of separation. The first type adduced is the visions seen by dying persons themselves. In spite of what Mr Saltmarsh says these visions are remarkable for two things<sup>1</sup>: (1) that the "persons" seen, sometimes by the dying man alone, sometimes also *or only* by those around him, are only those who are already "dead"; (2) that sometimes the dying person and even those with him believe them to be living, but it is found out subsequently that they were not alive at the time. Mr Saltmarsh says, "In fact there are cases of a dying mother apparently seeing her living children". I wonder to what cases he refers. I know of one case only. The mother did not see her children in the room where she was, but after a period of quiet or unconsciousness she stated that she had been to see them and her

<sup>1</sup> See "Deathbed Visions" cited above.

wraith was in fact seen at the distant place where her children were. Indeed this is not a deathbed vision at all. This rather looks like another case of "bolstering up".

The next type of deathbed evidence is that of witnesses of the departure of the soul body or signs of its departure. One of the best known cases is that described at length in *S.P.R. Journal*, Vol. XI, but there are a number of cases on record. Sometimes only curious lights are seen. Lastly, we have cases like Dr Wiltze (*S.P.R. Proceedings*, Vol. VII) in which the person when *in extremis* appears to himself to leave his body for the time, though connected with it by a "silver cord" and eventually returns to it. Mr. Saltmarsh does not even mention these cases, though if one was hunting for a crucial case, a well established one of this type might well be regarded as crucial.

Another type of phenomenon which tends to be most common at the crisis of death is the phantasm seen at a distance, usually by a close relative or friend. The most noticeable thing about these wraiths is that they tend to be seen most frequently when the physical body is either just dead or nearly so. This is surely against the mechanist theory of life. Further, it supports the idea that they are a manifestation of a soul body, whose connection with the physical body has either just been terminated or been greatly weakened.

There are besides a number of well evidenced cases in which these phantoms are seen a considerable time, sometimes years, after death. It is agreed, I think, that those seen at or near the time of death, are caused in some way by the dying person. This latter class are, therefore, evidence of survival. In some cases, *e.g.* the Chaffin Will case, the wraiths show purpose and knowledge of existing circumstance. Mr Saltmarsh says, "It is obvious that a weak part of this argument is the assumption that the conditions of production of a phantasm of the dead are the same as those of the living". I would say that it is obvious that it is the weak part of Mr. Saltmarsh's argument that he has to suggest without any basis of fact that they are different. Anyhow, to dismiss this kind of evidence as of no value does not show a very logical mind. Has Mr Saltmarsh ever studied the findings of the Report on the Census of Hallucinations or Camille Flammarion's "Death and its Mystery"? In the former I would specially refer him to the summary of the results of the chapter on "Phantasms of the Dead" and to Myers' note attached to the Report.

One other type of spontaneous case, which is really a subclass of those already discussed, is the testimony of children of tender age to the appearance of deceased relatives with whom they are heard



to converse as if they were alive, while they express surprise that others cannot see them. These are cases<sup>1</sup> at least that cannot be "explained" by Mr Saltmarsh as due to "strong existing expectation". As is well known, it was this type of case that so shook Richet's preconceived ideas.

As I have already discussed phenomena such as materialisation, direct voice, authentic writing, levitation and the like, I will say nothing more about them (see however below). Other items besides communications received through mediums demand a few words. Haunting is a queer thing, but however explained it tends to support the idea that the human mind and its thoughts persist after death. No explanation on mechanistic lines has much plausibility. The important feature from the point of view of this discussion is the fact that ghosts are "laid" sometimes by the adoption of the spiritist hypothesis. The same applies to cases of obsession, which Mr Saltmarsh does not mention. Certain doctors, Carl Wickland,<sup>2</sup> Magnin, Titus Bull and Alexander Cannon, all claim to have cured persons, some at least certified to be insane, by treating them as possessed by *soi-disant* spirits. Great weight should surely be attached to these successful practical results of the adoption of the hypothesis. Poltergeists, as Mr Saltmarsh agrees, point to the existence of an extraneous agency and so make the idea of another world in which life might continue after death less unlikely.

There is one variety of direct voice that requires a few words, viz. the phenomenon generally known as xenoglossy.<sup>3</sup> If the medium speaks correctly in a language unknown to him or any person present, even if he can merely converse in a language unknown to him with some foreigner and at the same time give proofs of identity, this may surely give some evidence for survival. Conversation in correct idiom and accent in an unknown language at any rate is a phenomenon that does not appear capable of explanation on naturalistic lines. There are a number of cases varying in detail on record. They were surely worth a mention by Mr Saltmarsh in his pursuit of the crucial case, or is it considered that no such case has been established? At any rate it will not be denied that if such cases could be proved, they would be of value as part of the chain.

There remain the purely mental phenomena. They have special value in providing evidence of identity, though it will have been

<sup>1</sup> See S.P.R. *Journal* (Vol. V, p. 139), and "Death and its Mystery," vol. III, Flammarion.

<sup>2</sup> "Thirty Years among the Dead," Dr Carl A. Wickland.

<sup>3</sup> "Polyglot Mediumship," by Bozzano (Watkins), "Ancient Egypt Speaks" (Dr F. H. Wood).



observed above that many of the physical and spontaneous cases provide evidence of identity which is quite as convincing as mere messages received or conversations held through mediums.

It is not necessary to discuss mental phenomena at length, since Mr Saltmarsh and, I think, every one who has studied the subject thoroughly, agrees that unless they can be explained by telepathy, clairvoyance or the powers of the subconscious, they would provide evidence of survival, varying in strength according to their quality. Book and newspaper tests, cross correspondences and proxy sittings appeal most to the intellectual. There are others, such as the discovery of lost documents and articles, and proofs of identity given by *soi-disant* spirits who are unknown to the medium or the sitter. One striking fact about them is that it is as if almost every means of proving identity has been tried and as if, since the original members of the Society have passed over to the other side, the methods have become more ingenious. To try to assess their value as evidence by quasi-mathematical calculations like those put forward by Mr Saltmarsh can only be described as farcical.

I remember the case of a senior wrangler, a member of the Indian Civil Service, who was appointed to work as a magistrate. He started one of his judgements as follows: "Let the credibility of the witnesses for the prosecution vary as to the credibility of the witnesses for the defence as X to Y" and proceeded to come to his decision by equations worked out in approved mathematical methods. I believe that from the mathematical point of view his reasoning was brilliant. However, in due course his judgement came before the High Court on appeal, with the result that the case was sent back for re-trial and the Local Government was informed that the Judges did not consider Mr — to be a fit person to exercise magisterial powers. It is not unfair to make a similar criticism of Mr Saltmarsh. You cannot treat psychical phenomena by this method. His calculations really mean nothing. He practically admits this by saying that, though numbers of cases of different kinds may increase the strength of evidence for survival, "until we have put definite estimates on the various probabilities involved, we cannot say what the increase amounts to (!)". In other words calculations of this kind will never get you anywhere. If scientists had approached hypotheses like that of evolution in this way, how little progress would have been made!

In considering our working hypothesis we must also give due weight, if anything more than due weight, to the facts which appear to tell against it. By Mr Saltmarsh's method they are not even mentioned. Physiologists point to the results of accident and dis-

ease, as well as the onset of old age, on the human mind as proof that there is nothing more in man than his physical body. Physicists, psycho-analysts and psychologists adduce similar arguments. Some of these have great force and indeed might be thought to be insurmountable. But no one has yet explained man's mental activities satisfactorily on a mechanistic basis. As Prof. Broad points out in his memoir on "Henry Sidgwick and Psychical Research" (S.P.R. *Proceedings*, Vol. XL), however forcibly they may put forward these views, in practice "no scientist regards himself or his colleagues for an instant as 'conscious automata'". Although therefore certain facts may appear irreconcilable at present with some of those advanced in favour of survival, it should be borne in mind that all *a priori* arguments are unsafe. Even now it is not impossible to construct a synthesis, though it may not seem convincing to our thinkers.

Apart from this type of reasoning, there is no general argument against the fact of survival which will account for all the evidence, which I have cited. Those with the widest scope may be summed up under the heads telepathy and/or the powers of the subconscious. Of these it may be stated that they are alternative methods of "explaining" some of the phenomena adduced to support the hypothesis. From the point of view of the materialist, the best that can be said of them is that they seem more consonant with the prevailing scientific theories. Yet most men of learning who have studied the subject, including I think our own President, incline to the view that telepathy itself cannot be explained within the materialistic scheme; and both telepathy and the powers of the subconscious have to be so strained to cover much of the evidence as to credit man, potentially at least, with divine omniscience. It is not unfair to say that as a method of avoiding the hypothesis that we possess a soul, explanation by telepathy and/or the powers of the subconscious is approaching argument in a circle.

I have now set out my case. I maintain that if all the phenomena which I have discussed are held to be clearly established—that is, on Mr Saltmarsh's premise—the probability of the hypothesis of survival being correct becomes so great that in spite of the *a priori* difficulties I have mentioned the majority of thinking people would adopt it—all the more because it opens the way to a more satisfactory explanation of the universe than the mechanistic scheme affords. In fact, what holds back the acceptance of it now is that the great majority of educated people know little or nothing of the facts or if they have some acquaintance with them are not persuaded of their truth. I do not suggest that these phenomena are fully understood, even by those who have studied them most. What I

maintain is that they point first of all to the existence of forces and intelligences outside or beyond the ordinary world of sense and matter, with which science has been hitherto concerned ; secondly, to man being something more than a mere creature of flesh and blood with five senses ; thirdly, to some part of him, including his mind and memory, surviving death ; and fourthly, to the possibility, under favourable conditions, of his being somehow able to communicate with those he has left behind. However, the facts are far from being established to the satisfaction of many of our Members and I have undertaken this survey of Mr Saltmarsh's paper not with the idea of convincing them that survival is a fact but rather to show that his method of approach is wrong, that all facts bearing on the hypothesis are of value and that its overwhelming probability will eventually be established, if at all, to the satisfaction of the majority by the cumulative effect of the evidence at all stages of man's existence.