

# PSYCHICAL RESEARCH AND SURVIVAL

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G. R. S. MEAD

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH has to proceed on scientific lines. The chief of the many problems which confront it is concerned with phenomena purporting to establish the fact of the survival of human personality after bodily death. It has first to authenticate scientifically the existence of such phenomena, next to investigate and accurately describe their nature, and then to attempt some explanation of them. Finally, if it finds itself unable to do so on any other supposition, it should not shrink from admitting what has been the oldest belief in the world as a scientific hypothesis, and if this is found to explain the phenomena more easily than any other theory, to give it at least that credit. In the following pages Dr. James H. Hyslop, the Secretary of the

American Society for Psychical Research, describes the genesis and the work of psychical research with special reference to this central problem, and deals at length with its scientific, philosophic, religious, and moral implications. Nor does he leave the subject in the air, as is usually the case in books on psychical research, but, basing himself on the experience of many years of personal investigation, and after testing the other hypotheses brought forward, he declares, with a full sense of responsibility, that, so far as he himself is concerned, he finds the fact of survival the only one that will in any satisfactory way co-ordinate and explain the phenomena. In the present age of extreme scepticism, such a declaration on the part of a scientific investigator requires great courage; and whatever else the open-minded reader may think of this summary and conclusion, he should at least be persuaded that there is in such phenomena sufficient to engage the serious attention of thoughtful minds and the unstinted energies of the best equipped workers.

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## P R E F A C E

THE size of this book compels me to summarize, in a somewhat dogmatic manner, the problems and the results of psychical research. It is impossible to give the evidence for the convictions expressed, as any attempt to do this in so limited a space, after outlining the problems, would simply lead to the objection that the evidence was insufficient. I can, therefore, only send readers to the vast literature of the subject, and more especially to the records of the Societies for Psychical Research, in the belief that an intelligent study of those records will result in at least a favourable consideration of the views herein presented. It is, in any case, desirable that we shall have an outline of the main ideas at the basis of the work and of the possible conclusions to which the facts lead. These have been stated as briefly and cogently as possible, so that students of a philosophical turn of mind



may have some conception of what the author thinks has been proved and what has not been proved scientifically. There has been a great deal of *a priori* criticism of the work, which has been as bad as much of the credulity or hasty speculation on the other side, and this summary endeavours to fix the bars for scepticism quite as definitely as for belief. The destructive critic has had his own way for a long while, and it is now time to do some constructive work. This small volume tries only to point out the direction in which this can be done.

JAMES H. HYSLOP.

NEW YORK CITY.



# PSYCHICAL RESEARCH AND SURVIVAL

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THE term 'psychic research' is easily misunderstood by two separate and opposed types of mind. Both classes assume that it primarily has to do with spirits; but one ridicules the subject, while the other looks to it for proof of its hope or belief. This limitation of import, however, is a mistake. The only thing that will make this clear is a history of the movement which names its work by this term.

In 1882 the English Society for Psychical Research was founded by a group of men who felt that it was a scandal to science that certain apparently supernormal phenomena had not been scientifically investigated. Professor Henry Sidgwick of Cambridge University was its first President; Mr. Arthur J. Balfour, then a Member of

Parliament and afterward Prime Minister of England, Professor W. F. Barrett (now Sir William Barrett), Professor Balfour Stewart, Richard Hutton, and others were Vice-Presidents. Mr. Frederic W. H. Myers, Mr. Edmund Gurney, Mr. Frank Podmore, Professor Barrett, and others made up the Council. Before many years had passed the Society numbered among its officers or members of the Council a large number of able scientific men in England. Among them were Sir William Crookes, Lord Raleigh, Sir William Ramsay, and others. The Members and Associates went into the hundreds, and their number has steadily increased since that time.

The motive for organizing the Society was the existence of current stories about mind-reading and the general phenomena of spiritualism. They had all been classed together by one type of mind and referred to the interference of spirits in the phenomena of mind and matter, whether there was any ground either for the acceptance of the facts as alleged or the explanation of them was the problem to be solved. There was no doubt as to the fact that unusual phenomena were frequently alleged, but the question for science was whether they were what they appeared to be. In his first address to the Society Professor Sidgwick asked and answered the question why a

Society should be formed. He said: "In answering this, the first question, I shall be able to say something on which I hope we shall all agree: meaning by 'we,' not merely we who are in this room, but we and the scientific world outside; and as, unfortunately, I have but few observations to make on which so much agreement can be hoped for, it may be as well to bring this into prominence; namely, that we are all agreed that the present state of things is a scandal to the enlightened age in which we live. That the dispute as to the reality of these marvellous phenomena,—of which it is quite impossible to exaggerate the scientific importance, if only a tenth part of what has been alleged by generally credible witnesses could be shown to be true,—I say it is a scandal that the dispute as to the reality of these phenomena should still be going on, that so many competent witnesses should have declared their belief in them, that so many others should be profoundly interested in having the question determined, and yet that the educated world, as a body, should still be simply in the attitude of incredulity."

This was in 1882, and the memoirs of John Addington Symonds tell us that Professor Sidgwick was experimenting on his own account as early as 1867, fifteen years prior to the organization of the Society, with



mediums to ascertain if he could find evidence of human survival of bodily death. Just when the interest of Mr. Myers arose I do not know, but very early he had seen the importance of the subject and enlisted in the cause. His father was a clergyman in the Church of England, and between that environment in his early life and his classical studies he imbibed scepticism, while he lost no ethical interest in the ideals of religion. Others felt the same, and it was quite fitting that one of the authors of *The Unseen Universe* should be conspicuous in the formation of the Society.

It was thus no idle curiosity that led to the foundation of this research. It was a keen appreciation of the wide significance of such phenomena, if they could be scientifically substantiated. They had been safely laid away by the materialistic movement as uninteresting to its outlook or of no concern in its theories. But they refused to remain in that condition. They were for ever re-appearing in each generation, as if the cosmos were determined to see that they did not die at the command of a respectable hierarchy of intellectuals. It seemed to these open-minded men whom I have mentioned, that it was high time to investigate what had been rejected without this ordeal, and the Society for Psychical Research was the result.

It was inevitable that the claims of spiritualism should occupy a prominent place in the work. They were the object of intense interest to one class and a good butt for ridicule by the other, and anything that did not savour of this alliance or offer some practical outcome was a matter of curious interest to people who had nothing else to talk about. The men who founded the work, however, placed it on a comprehensive basis. It was not to be devoted exclusively to estimating the claims of the spiritualists, but it was made to include a large number of alleged facts which presented no superficial evidence of 'supernatural' agencies. These other phenomena were dowsing, telepathy or thought-transference, <sup>the</sup>hypnotism and the various phenomena of the subconscious and secondary personality, together with certain types of hallucinations. The spiritualistic phenomena inviting attention, whether they had that explanation or not, were apparitions, mediumship, and certain types of coincidental dreams. Some of the last phenomena shared their meaning with telepathy.

There are just two ways in which we may study such phenomena. First, we may assume that the scientific materialism of the age has established itself sufficiently to be accorded the right of judgment regarding them, and so make every concession to its prejudices.

This means that we shall assume that the probabilities are against the hypothesis of any spiritual meaning for the world. This is the sceptical attitude of mind, and it may be held by the man who wishes to believe but feels that evidence is lacking for a spiritual interpretation of nature, or it may be held by the man who refuses to revise the verdict of materialism and insists on the resolution of all the alleged facts into some sort of illusion or superstition. The second way of looking at the facts will be that from the assumptions of normal life a spiritual meaning for human life and its development is desirable and possible. The materialist, whether he avows or ignores this view, assumes that the present life is sufficient unto itself and will not listen to the monitions of a normal mind and conscience. But the religious mind, not always safely ensconced in a salary for indulging in intellectual athletics, insists on trying to find if life is worth living, and it will not surrender without a fight to the dark fate which the materialist assigns to consciousness. This second class of minds intends to take the wider view of things, and not to evade or ignore facts in the interest of a scientific dogmatism that may only have substituted the worship of matter for that of spirit.

But there have been so many illusions, and so much superstition and error associ-



ated with past religious beliefs, that the triumphs of physical science have gained for it the admiration and confidence of all intelligent minds who see no assurance for the existence of spirit and fear the restoration of the ages of barbarism in which spiritualism prevailed. Ever since the revival of science, which followed on the introduction of Copernican astronomy, the study of nature has dissolved a host of beliefs that had taken refuge in religion, and has associated intelligence with scepticism and the emancipation which it brought the human mind. The age of authority which rested on tradition declined, and in its place came the demand to verify, in present experience, every assertion made about nature. This was the essential feature of science; the interrogation of the present moment for its testimony to the nature of things. The cultivation of this method has established it in authority, and made it the judge of what is valid about the past, instead of accepting the past as the standard for measuring the present. Its exclusive devotion to physical phenomena gives it the prestige which success always guarantees, and it uses that criterion to justify its interpretation of nature. It has supplanted the authority of religion, and with its predilection for physical conceptions and phenomena, which are by far more universal for normal



experience, it can sustain a position which is not to be easily questioned. This makes it necessary for any belief that circumscribes the claims of physical science to make concessions to its method if that belief is to modify scientific authority, and this whether or not it accepts the assumptions by which the power of physical science has been acquired.

There is no use in disguising the fact that the controversy about psychic phenomena is between those who sympathize with materialism and those who sympathize with the desire for a spiritual interpretation of the world. Prejudice is probably about equally distributed on both sides, and accusations of it are justified only as a *tu quoque* defence. We may try to disregard the nature of this dispute by talking about the scientific aspect of the phenomena, thereby trying to make ourselves and others believe that we have no ulterior interests in studying the phenomena; but the real nature of the issue will not be evaded in this way. It is correct enough to treat the facts in this manner as a means of insisting that prejudices on one side or the other must be suppressed and the conclusion established in the light of cold reason and truth. But that is not a good ground for saying or believing that the facts have no relation to the ancient controversy between matter and spirit, even

though we come to the conclusion that they are pretty much the same thing.

The study of primitive culture shows unmistakably that spiritualism has been perhaps the universal belief of savage races, and it is that fact which makes it the source of so much ridicule on the part of the cultured and the scientific. It is so much the habit to use savage beliefs as evidence of ignorance and superstition, that one wonders why they are not also made the subject of abuse for believing in the existence of matter. It has always been the mark of progress that a man shall have escaped the dominion of beliefs and customs of the uncivilized, and spiritualism among savages was marked by such immoral practices that the belief had to go the way of its associated ideas and customs. All the great religions had to face this primitive belief, and for political reasons usually compromised with it, where they could not displace or modify it. It was the revolt against its inhumanities and its superstitions that instigated a new civilization and determined new standards of morality. No wonder that the belief in a future life inherited the bad odour of its associated incidents and practices. The philosophic point of view which had represented the study of nature, a well-ordered and stable cosmos, as against the capricious interferences of divine beings,

soon became the criterion of culture and intelligence, and ever since that time the belief in the 'supernatural' became the mark of weak intellects. Whether the pendulum had not swung too far the other way is not a matter of interest here. I am only indicating the actual facts of history which determine the standard of judgment for most men in regard to everything. The intellectual and moral interests associated with one or the other point of view have perpetuated themselves through all ages, and will do so as long as men differ in regard to the general meaning of things, or in regard to the place of imagination and hope in human belief and action.

But it was not the controversy between materialism and spiritualism that was the avowed interest in the organization of psychic research. That was but the latent issue behind the scenes. The scientific spirit was triumphant enough to insist that the human mind must be indifferent to consequences in the investigation of the facts. Science had succeeded in making Stoics of devotees. They were men who were interested in the truth for its own sake, and who would sacrifice the dearest interests of the heart to their passion for the facts, and this passion allowed no choice between the emotions and the intellect in the determination of the truth. Moloch was no more



implacable a divinity than science. Hence those who asked for the investigation of psychic phenomena, could not beg for any preconceived conclusions or theories to account for them. They had to abide the judgment of scepticism. Investigation might dissolve the alleged facts into illusions or explain them by some other cause than spirit. Consequently the inquiry had to be made on the basis that there was only a residuum of real or alleged phenomena as yet unexplained by existing hypotheses. What investigation might establish no one could forecast, least of all that it should issue in confirming a theory which had been the favourite of savages and the contempt of the civilized.

Besides, there were phenomena which could not lay any claim, superficially at least, to the spiritualist's explanation. They were certainly not evidence for such a view, and it was necessary to investigate the subject discriminatingly. The layman had simply resorted to one general explanation of all incidents which seemed a little mysterious to him, and it had frequently been found that he was too hasty and had made no allowance for slight extensions of well-known laws of events. Hence the first duty of science was to classify its facts and determine those which were relevant and those that were not relevant to the

spiritualist's claims. The Society, therefore, announced as the object of its inquiries the following several fields of phenomena:—

“ 1. An examination of the nature and extent of any influence which may be exerted by one mind upon another, apart from any generally recognized mode of perception.

“ 2. The study of hypnotism, and the forms of so-called mesmeric trance, with its alleged insensibility to pain; clairvoyance and other allied phenomena.

“ 3. A critical revision of Reichenbach's researches with certain organizations called sensitive, and an inquiry whether such organizations possess any power of perception beyond a highly exalted sensibility of the recognized sensory organs.

“ 4. A careful investigation of any reports, resting on strong testimony, regarding apparitions at the moment of death, or otherwise, or regarding disturbances in houses reputed to be haunted.

“ 5. An inquiry into the various physical phenomena commonly called spiritualistic; with an attempt to discover their causes and general laws.

“ 6. The collection and collation of existing materials bearing on the history of these subjects.”

It will be noticed that several types of phenomena now considered as important in psychic research are omitted from this

list, and that the conception of spiritualism is limited to the physical phenomena, with apparent ignorance of the mental phenomena in mediumship that have much more significance than the physical. This may have been the fault of the people who had so emphasized the physical phenomena as to make scientific men think there were no others; but it is a conspicuous fact that trance and other mediumship than physical, and dowsing, secondary personality and the whole field of the subconscious, have been added to the problem since the inception of the Society.

Among these groups of phenomena, dowsing, telepathy, physical phenomena, afterwards technically named telekinesis, and hypotism contain nothing that can be regarded as evidence of spiritualism, whatever explanation we may give them. They, or some of them, were quite evidently supernatural in some sense of the term, but they afforded no evidence of transcendental agents like spirits, and hence they suggested the possibility of eliminating spiritistic influences from the whole field of the supernormal. But whatever the case, the scientific problem required that conclusions should not be preconceived, and the popular conception of the phenomena as to their meaning had to determine the first form of stating the objects of the Society, which would change,



and did change, as the observation of facts required it to do.

It was inevitable, however, that spiritualism should occupy the first place in the general conception of the Society's work, and this in spite of any or all efforts to circumscribe it. Human interests are too great to meet with repression on this point, except for respectability, and they will tolerate rival phenomena only by compulsion. It is the resolute purpose of the scientific spirit, however, to insist that personal interests, no matter how important, shall wait on critical investigation, and hence the Society insisted upon its duty to respect the best scientific method it knew in the study of the facts.

Telepathy seems to have been the first field in which results were plentiful or accessible with any degree of assurance. But this term soon began to be misunderstood and has not yet been made clear. From being a term to express mental coincidences between living people not due to chance or normal sense perception, it became an explanatory term of wide import, though the fact is that we have not the remotest conception of what the cause is that determines the coincidences. It, however, offered the best field for the study of phenomena that could have no superficial claim to being spiritistic, and hence would encounter



less prejudice than the hypothesis of spirits. Gradually, however, the phenomena of apparitions and mediumship came into consideration, and though they were modified or explained away by telepathy of a wonderful and incredible sort, they remained and still remain to plague the inquirer. In recent years there has been little experiment in telepathy; most of the work has gathered about mediumship of some sort, and opinion remains divided as to its meaning. But the recognition of something to investigate is now well-nigh universal, and animosities are shown on both sides of the problem.

On the one hand, the materialist is keenly conscious of the consequences to his general interpretation of nature, and fears a reaction toward the 'supernatural' against which modern science had fought its most successful battles. On the other hand, there are two interested classes. One is the Church, which plays a waiting game to see what the result will be, and the other is the enthusiastic spiritualist who has abandoned both the Church and the materialistic school, and cares for no prejudices based upon the finality of past theories. The scientific man who has hitherto felt safe in the achievements of his method for the last three centuries, having excluded superstition, as he calls the 'supernatural,' from his con-



## CHAPTER II

### MATERIALISM

THE term 'materialism' stands for three sets of ideas or points of view about things. The first is a general theory of the world and man; the second concerns the limitations of knowledge; and the third relates to ethics or the moral consequences of the general theory. They might be called materialism, sensationalism, and sensualism, if we desired distinct terms in the discussion. But this is not the place to carry out technical controversies. They will each come under notice in the proper way. All that I desire to impress on the reader is that there is the metaphysical, the psychological, and the ethical aspects of the general theory.

Materialism means that all phenomena are phenomena of matter, whether they are events of the physical or of the mental world. We are so accustomed from tradition to think of mental states, the phenomena of consciousness, as implying a soul, that we seem not to realize how much scepticism has done to discredit this view.

Men in practical life have so associated the term materialism with sensuous habits of conduct, and the philosophical idealists have so equivocated with the term, that we think materialism has no standing in court, when the fact is that it was never stronger than it is to-day, though men protest that they do not believe it. They are talking of the sensuous life as opposed to intellectual and æsthetic behaviour. Though they deny their belief in materialism, they are never ardent in advocating survival from bodily death, and in this betray their equivocations with the terms of the problem. The primary issue with all of them is whether what is called materialism in its metaphysical sense adequately accounts for consciousness. To understand the meaning of its claims we should examine just what the theory in its widest aspect means. It is a theory of the universe that is not confined to modern times. Many of the Buddhists were in reality materialists, and they preceded Greek thinkers. As a well-defined and elaborate doctrine, it did not take form among the Greeks until the decline of their civilization. It clearly lay in embryo during the whole period of Greek philosophic reflection, but it was only latent until Empedocles, Democritus, and Epicurus developed it.

The main genius of Greek philosophy



was shown in the search for the elements of things, 'elements of the world,' as St. Paul called them. It was the 'stuff' out of which things were made that enlisted the main interest of the reflective Greeks. They were less interested in the forces or causes that arranged the order of the world than they were in escaping the beliefs about such causes. The popular beliefs in religion and polytheism had so degraded and irrationalized the causes of phenomena, that the scientific and philosophic mind sought some theory which would account for the stability of things, and so looked in the direction of matter for its explanation of the cosmos. In matter men found the stuff out of which the world was made, and they could seek the explanation of the cosmic order either in causes outside of matter or in its own activities and changes. The materialists thought they had found it in the atomic theory, Anaxagoras and Plato sought it in some sort of divine being, and later Christianity made the divine being the creator of the elements as well as the disposer of the cosmic order.

The difference between the two schools of thinking began with the distinction between *efficient* and *material* causes, though this distinction was not definitely and consciously carried out in Greek philosophies.

Aristotle recognized the distinction, but did not make it the basis of a distinction between philosophic systems, and it had to work its way out unconsciously in the speculative systems of history. By a material cause I mean the stuff or material out of which things are made, and by an efficient cause I mean the force or agent which puts them together. For instance, in the case of a machine the material cause would be the iron and wood of which it was constituted, the efficient cause would be the man who made the machine. Now it was the former that chiefly interested the Greeks, though the latter crept now and then into their systems. The earliest thinkers tried to find the primitive matter out of which the world and organic life were made. Some made the ultimate element water, some air, some fire or heat, and some what they called the 'infinite,' or some indefinite and supersensible condition of matter which developed in the forms of physical things that we see and touch. Some made the elements four, and then came the atomists who made them innumerable and infinite in number. Besides these elements, Empedocles introduced into them the efficient forces of 'love' and 'hate,' or what we should call attraction and repulsion; but this idea was not carried out, and the system in its later development

supposed that the atoms were eternally falling, and in order to get into combinations swerved from the perpendicular direction in which they were falling by a free act of their own. The Greeks had no such conception of gravitation as we have, in which particles of matter exercise attraction on other particles. Gravity with the Greeks was simply the weight of the object itself, and this was capable of self-motion. With the eternity of the atoms and the power of self-motion, the materialist philosopher thought he could explain the whole order of the world. He denied the action of the gods on nature, though admitting their existence curiously enough. It sufficed to have the atoms and their motion, and hence the cosmos, as we know it, was the result of a fortuitous concourse of these elements. Strangely enough, too, the same system admitted the existence of a soul, but denied its immortality or survival of bodily death. The soul, being a complex organism of ether or finer matter, dissolved, as did all complex things. It was at this point that materialism met opposition on the part of all who were interested in the persistence of consciousness. There would perhaps have been no difficulty with its theory of the physical world, had it not been for this accompaniment of the materialistic theory. It had no direct evidence



that the soul perished, but its reason for denying survival or affirming its perishability was the essentially ephemeral nature of all complex things or combinations of atoms. It might have had its way with the explanation of the physical world but for its attack on a belief so tenacious as immortality. But with or without a reason for denying immortality, it got this denial associated with its cosmic ideas, and ever since has fixed that conception of its meaning in history.

Christianity attacked this position in three ways, the first scientific in method, and the other two philosophic. Its first attack was an appeal to a real or alleged fact, the resurrection. It had relied on miracles to establish the divinity of its founder, and this perhaps before it had to meet the fact of his death. But after his death it asserted his resurrection. The story, whether founded on an hallucination, an apparition, or some other more real fact, was believed, and it succeeded in founding a new religion. But the events that centred about the life and death of Christ have such a psychic semblance that we may well imagine that some phenomena, no matter how badly distorted by reporters and the influence of legend, occurred to suggest survival after death; and we must remember here that the doctrine of the resurrection was fully

developed in human thought before the story of Christ's was told. The controversy between the Sadducees and Pharisees is evidence of this. The Sadducees were the rationalists, the materialists, and the sceptics of the Hebrew people at this period. The Pharisees were the chief sect of religious people, and we can well imagine that they had answered the Epicurean materialists denial of immortality by appealing to apparitions as evidence that the ethereal organism did not perish as the materialists affirmed. This was all that was necessary to set up a doctrine of the resurrection. We must remember that antiquity had no such theory of gravitation as we have. They had no conception of matter attracting matter and thus causing its motion, except in Empedocles, whose idea was not retained. They thought it could move itself by virtue of its weight. Its weight was a property which accounted for its falling, and free will, as we have seen, accounted for its swerving aside to enter into combinations. They might as well have made it fall by free will. Lighter matter, they say, rose upward, and there was no conception of the cause of this which we now know. It was simply the nature of heavy matter to fall or move downward towards the earth, and lighter matter to rise. As spirit was fine matter or ether it rose, and the idea gave rise, even in such

men as Aristotle, to the belief that the stars were divine, because they were situated so far from the earth, all heavy matter coming to the earth naturally. Souls attached to their bodies and interested in the carnal life remained, for a time at least, in Sheol or Hades for purification. This idea figured even in the mythical view stated by Plato when discussing immortality. It was the finer spirits that rose to the stars. This idea is found also in ancient hero worship. But for us here we desire only to understand how the idea of a resurrection might arise and obtain currency. If Christ appeared as a phantasm after His death—whether or not as an hallucination due to excitement or other causes, makes no difference—the common people might be pardoned for their interpretation of the phenomenon, and it would involve a direct denial of the materialistic theory. It would be interpreted as evidence that the ethereal organism or soul did not perish with the grosser physical body. Epicureanism would then have either to concede survival or change its view of the soul. It chose the latter alternative in the course of its development, being more interested in a position that would remove superstition and the fear of death than it was to believe in a soul and its survival. It took time, however, to bring about this change of conception.



The two philosophic attacks on materialism were as follows:—The first assumed the point of view of Anaxagoras, Plato, and Aristotle. It set up a divine being; Reason as Anaxagoras called it, Demiourgos or World-disposer as Plato named it, and Prime Mover, First Cause, as Aristotle termed it. Whatever matter was, it could not move itself, and, whether it was eternal or not, it was supposed to be influenced in all its combinations by this divine intelligence. In this way Christianity obtained a leverage on materialism which enabled it to assert or believe with greater confidence than would otherwise have been the case, that a soul existed to account for the voluntary activities of living organisms. That once conceded, the presumption was for its survival.

But it went a step further. It refused to admit that matter, the elements even, could be eternal. It regarded the very atoms as created, and thus it cleared an easy way for the existence of spirit. It sought outside of matter the cause both of the existence of matter and of its cosmic arrangement in systems. Spirit was the eternal background of things, and hence, with this conception, it was easy to have faith in the existence and destiny of a human soul. Spirit being naturally immortal and matter ephemeral or transient, it would appear to be anomalous indeed if a human soul did not survive.

But this philosophic view developed only with time, and after the age of miracles either ceased to exist or became distrusted as legendary. It ruled history until the revival of science. When this came it was with a terribly revolutionary change in the point of view, whose consequences were seen at the outset, but could not be made clear to the common mind, which held to its beliefs without any knowledge of the philosophic point of view. This revolutionary change was initiated by the discovery of the indestructibility of matter and the conservation of energy. The first of these reinstated the atom or elements as the permanent basis of things; and the second, the eternity of motion or energy. The attack on the theistic position was direct, at least in popular conceptions of the problem. Matter became the eternal thing and intelligence the transient function of it. Spirit seemed no longer the basis or cause, but the effect or function of matter. The materialist then gave up the existence of a soul, and maintained that intelligence or consciousness was a functional action of the organism or of the brain. The atomic theory came into its own again, except that the materialist did not return to the Epicurean admission that there was a soul. He kept clear of that position, because his own doctrine of the eternity of matter would have decided

the probabilities for survival on that assumption. He simply gave up the soul and explained mental states by the same means that we explain digestion, circulation, secretion, etc. The development of physiology and physical science, with what we know of chemical action, and all the phenomena of abnormal psychology, especially as connected with disease and accident, as they affect the integrity of consciousness, strengthened the idea that mental states were but activities of the brain or organism. The materialistic point of view became triumphant, and remained so until the organization of psychic research.

The defence of the spiritualistic point of view, using that term in its older philosophical sense, was based on Cartesian assumptions. These were that matter and mind had no common properties. Consciousness had no qualities that in any way identified it with material properties, and hence it required a soul to be its subject or basis. Matter was the subject, ground, or substance on which weight, density, extension, motion, and all other properties of physical substance rested. Consciousness being irresolvable into anything like physical phenomena, supposedly, could not be explained by a physical substance as its ground. Hence, with this assumption of its absolute difference from matter and material properties, it was easy



to suppose a soul, and the permanence of substance and energy would render it more than probable that a soul would survive. In this way Cartesianism, while applying strictly mechanical laws to the behaviour of matter, had no difficulty in setting up a defence for the existence and survival of the soul.

But this view of things had to encounter the difficulties which it set up in the very need of defending the existence of a soul. It implied that matter and mind were so different that they could not act on each other. The most evident fact in the world, however, was that they either did so act on each other or seemed to do so; and philosophies were constructed to overcome this appearance of disconnection implied in the definition of the two substances. With those systems we have nothing to do here, but they represented the natural demand of human thought that things should have a greater unity than this dualism, as Cartesianism was called, offered. Then the spirit of science with its eternity of matter and motion made it easy to give up the soul and obtain that unity without trying to defend the religious conceptions of things. It found in the discoveries of physical science a sufficient relief from the superstitions of the past, and a means of protecting the fundamental demand of philosophy for the

unity of things; and finding all the phenomena of human experience coinciding with the hypothesis of an ephemeral existence for consciousness, it rested satisfied with that explanation of it. Physiology gave up the need of a soul for its explanation. Biology did the same, also giving up the supposition that there was any 'vital force,' and psychology became an experimental investigation of reaction time, association time, and various psychophysical phenomena alone. The older psychology was relegated to the mortuary, though treated in its obsequies with some regard for its poverty and age, just to save its children from the charge of ingratitude.

Such has been the history and nature of human thinking, on the side of science, regarding the soul, whenever it inclined toward the materialistic theory. It is not necessary to enter into any theory of what matter is in order to understand what materialism is and was. Even the atomic theory was not necessary to the materialistic point of view. That theory only happened to get associated with what is called materialism. Its fundamental idea was and is that all organic things are compounds of different substances and are dissolvable into the elements which constitute them. It is not necessary to regard those elements as *atoms*, a term meaning indivisible things. It seemed

necessary for ancient philosophers to set these up for their purpose, which was to explain *what* things were made of, not so much *how* they were made. If, however, the ancient thinkers had seen the problem rightly they would not have taken the trouble to define their elements as *atoms*. They were as much interested as the Christians in something eternal, and sought to find this in the 'atoms' or indivisible matter, as the Christians sought it in spirit, which was also made indivisible. But materialism did not need to complicate its theory of consciousness with an atomic doctrine. It could have rested content with the idea that physical organisms are compounds, and that the functions, manifested as a consequence of the complexity of their organization, perished with the dissolution of the body. Elements and atoms may only be relatively what they are called; and this seems to have been the view which has finally prevailed in the modification of the atomic theory by the doctrine of ions and electrons, which assumes that the elements or atoms are not simple and indivisible. They are or need be the only things which come together in physical organisms and give rise to functional activities that do not exist in the elements by themselves, whether simple or complex, divisible or indivisible.

Now this has become the real position of



materialism in the last stage of its development. Whatever it believed about atoms, they did not figure in the construction of its theory of mind. Having abandoned the Cartesian view that the nature of consciousness might protect the existence of a soul, it simply regarded consciousness as a resultant of composition, just as the light in burning gas is the resultant of combining oxygen and carbon, to disappear whenever that combination ceases. It makes no difference whether oxygen and carbon are elements or not. It is their union that is the significant thing. Here it is that materialism gets its strength, whatever view we hold as to the nature of atoms or whether there is anything else in the cosmos or not. The scientific facts of all human experience are that consciousness, as normally known, is always associated with physical structure and organism, and that we have no normal knowledge of its existence apart from this association. The consequence is that it is supposed to have no other connection, and that it is unable to exist when this organism dies. It is supposedly a function like the ordinary bodily functions of digestion, circulation, secretion, assimilation, etc. These are admittedly bodily functions, and as undoubtedly perish with death. It makes no difference to this point of view what conception you take of consciousness. It may



be as different from ordinary physical phenomena as you like. It is not its nature that determines the case, but the *evidential* problem. We must leave the nature of consciousness to be determined otherwise than by introspection if it can be done at all. It is the one fact that we know it normally as associated with material organism, and we have no normal traces of its continuance after dissolution of the body. All the facts thus evidentially coincide with the hypothesis that it depends for existence on association with the physical body as do the vital functions. True it is that this view does not prove it perishable. It is not a function that is *sensibly* known, and it might exist *super-sensibly* without sensible knowledge of that existence. But, apart from psychic phenomena, there is no alleged or apparent evidence for this independent existence, and we have only to discredit all the claims for super-normal phenomena to hold on to the materialistic interpretation of mind. The evidence that we have normally, confines its association to the body, and the absence of the body is followed by the absence of evidence for consciousness—if we refuse to consider what psychic research has to say. All the facts, so far as known and recognized normally, exclude evidence of survival, and hence stand as evidence for materialism, in so far as that is convertible with the view

that consciousness is a function of the physical organism. If you would overthrow it you must produce evidence that consciousness is not a function of the body, and the only way to do this is to appeal to the *fact* of its survival, if that can be shown, and not to speculations about its nature. That is, we must find facts in human experience which cannot be explained by supposing that consciousness is a function of the organism. Until this is done the materialist has the right of way. Apart from psychic phenomena, he can say that all the normal evidence favours the view that mental states are like all other bodily functions, if not in nature, certainly in connections; and it becomes a question of fact whether they survive, not one of their nature. I repeat that he cannot prove its destruction. He can only infer it from his theory, which will be a legitimate hypothesis as long as no evidence is produced for isolating human consciousness, that is, finding it existing apart from bodily associations.

Many will tell us that materialism has been refuted or abandoned long ago, especially since the time of Kant. This statement, however, is not true; and I unhesitatingly assert that any man who maintains that materialism has been abandoned is ignorant of both philosophy and of scientific views of the relation between consciousness and

the organism. It is *sensationalism* and *sensational realism* that have been abandoned. Materialism has never been convertible or synonymous with these ideas except in untutored minds. The philosopher has always based his materialism on the supersensible atoms or upon the relation of consciousness to the organism; and though he appealed primarily to sensation in experience for his data of knowledge, it was never a sensational view of knowledge that he took when he was explaining the relations of mental states to the brain or organism. Hence it is only a piece of equivocation to say that materialism has been refuted and abandoned. The idealists who assert this so constantly are never very forward in asserting and defending immortality, and they never appeal to scientific facts for it. They are quite as saturated with the idea that consciousness is a resultant of composition as any materialist; and as it is not the nature of matter or even the existence of atoms that affects the question or defines the meaning of materialism as related to this problem, all the essential features of the materialistic theory remain intact and without refutation by idealism.

It is only convenient to throw a sop to the populace by denying materialism, so long as one is careful not to tell them that the idealist's conception of materialism is



not theirs. Subterfuge will save a salary where frankness and honesty will not. Common men will not put up with equivocation, and that is known well enough by the philosophers. It is not, however, the best method of meeting the instinct for persecution to deceive it by concessions to its phraseology without making concessions to its views. The proper thing to do is to face the issue and to educate the public. Hence I shall not admit for a moment that materialism is defunct. It was never more alive and powerful than it is to-day, and that is evident in the stubborn and persistent assaults on psychical research from physical scientists, and the contempt of the general public which is intelligent enough to know that, apart from psychic phenomena, there is no evidence of a scientific sort for the survival of personality. It is the meaning of materialism as expressed in this view of the evidential situation that defines and preserves it as a theory, not some refined and equivocal conception of matter or the vague theories of idealism which are true for all of us without having any relation whatever to the problem of survival.

I repeat, therefore, that materialism was never stronger than it has been since Kant, though it has begun to weaken partly from the influence of the theories of ether and other supersensible realities which tend to



resolve matter into something apparently not material, and partly from the influence of psychic research which has called attention to a vast body of phenomena that are inconsistent with every form of materialism, in so far as it pronounces against the existence and survival of a soul or human consciousness. But apart from these phenomena the physicist and physiologist have all the evidence on their side for at least an agnostic verdict. Those who refuse to recognize psychic phenomena of any supernatural kind are entirely right in questioning survival, and as long as they make normal experience the standard of evidence the facts will be in their favour. Materialism is simply and only an affirmation of the uniform association of consciousness as a fact with bodily organism and the absence of scientific evidence for its existence apart from that organism. This criterion of the problem has to be accepted and the contention of the materialist met before he can be dislodged from his position.

## CHAPTER III

### SPIRITUALISM

THE term 'spiritualism' has three rather distinct meanings. Since the time of Immanuel Kant it had almost dropped out of usage, except with that despised class of believers who think they can communicate with the dead. More recently many of the Continental thinkers are reviving the term in its older comprehensive meaning, and also to include a view, that of the modern spiritualists, which they do not hold. But the older meaning of the term, one actually recognized by Kant properly to denote the theory opposed to materialism, was that it denoted the doctrine that man had an immortal soul. It was thus the Christian theory as opposed to Epicurean and other forms of materialism. But the influence of Kant was to abandon the term and to substitute for it idealism. He had contended that we could not prove the existence of a soul or its immortality from any *a priori* grounds as to its nature, and though he advanced what he called the moral argument

for immortality, it has had no specially enthusiastic support. He held that duty demanded of man more than it was possible to realize in his bodily existence, and as virtue should have happiness for its reward, a reward man could not get in this life, he must have an infinite time to realize what the moral law commanded. Otherwise he could not conceive the world to be rational. But Kant seems not to have noticed that he assumed the world to be rational, which is the thing to be proved; and it is quite possible that we cannot suppose it rational until we prove survival after death. Hence the problem would be turned round. It was probably this fact, with the general feeling of his agnostic outcome, from the philosophic point of view, even though it was correct, that made men think there was no satisfactory evidence or proof of immortality. When the philosophic arguments, which had seemed to do such good service, had been resolved into fallacies, it was natural to think that the moral argument was only a disguised philosophical one, and manufactured to satisfy the religious Cerberus. Then, as Kant himself substituted idealism for spiritualism, the opposition became one between theories of *knowledge* and not theories of *things* whose nature we did not know. The whole practical outcome of his system was to



discourage a positive belief in the existence of a soul, and the term spiritualism even in philosophy fell into desuetude.

Later the term was adopted by certain people to denote the possibility of communicating with the dead. It had all the meaning of the older view, but added what the older and more respectable meaning did not assert—namely, communication with the dead. It was suggested, possibly, by the work of Swedenborg, which Kant had actually studied and rejected for his more philosophical view. But it was some time after this that the term obtained general vogue. Wherever certain types of phenomena occurred, such as apparitions, mediumistic phenomena, genuine or otherwise, a large class of people appealed to them in proof of another life. Idealism was the subject of interest in the great philosophies, but the common people, not being able to master Kanto-Hegelian ambiguities, went off to the vulgar phenomena of mediumship for their evidence, and called their proof and theory by the name of spiritualism. They even succeeded in limiting it to the idea of communication with the dead, and separating it from any of the reigning ideas of philosophy and religion. It was not born and bred in the larger views which had characterized religion, and so got no farther in its meaning



than the phenomena that interested its popular votaries. It was intended to be the source of a hope which philosophic agnosticism could not supply.

The third meaning of the term is not found in its use to express a theory of the soul and its survival, but appears in the adjectival form, 'spiritual,' to describe certain modes or attitudes of mind. It is applied differently according to the school which uses it. In this meaning the term was, of course, borrowed from the religious world, where it originally implied or was associated with the doctrine of immortality, and so described the states of mind and beliefs which were supposedly necessary for salvation. When idealistic agnosticism arose, it was retained in that school to denote the things that were more important than a sensuous life, and had no implications of immortality connected with it, while the religious world meant by it states of mind that had no meaning apart from the belief in the existence of God and immortality. The religiously 'spiritual' is a man's attitude of mind toward God and a future life leading to right living. This right living comprehends all that is implied in the term moral or ethical, and includes love, reverence, faith, obedience, all of these having a definite object to which they are directed. God and man are these objects,

and the 'spiritual' is more conspicuously an emotional attitude of mind toward them, leading to salvation. But with agnostic idealism, the 'spiritual' is the intellectual and æsthetic, the philosophical and artistic life, as opposed to sensuous gratification alone. It is not necessarily complicated with the belief in the divine or in immortality. It claims to be opposed to materialism, but its materialism, as explained above, is only sensationalism, or what may be called ethical materialism, and is not in the least opposed to metaphysical materialism. As religion had emphasized the higher mental life, whether intellectual, æsthetic, or ethical, the idealistic school took this conception, and appropriated it for its description of duty without involving the things that made it a duty. The 'spiritual,' in the conception of the intellectual and æsthetic man, is compatible only with an economic ideal. It requires an income and leisure for its realization, at least as sought and practised by those who extol it, and the "dull millions that toil foredone at the wheel of labour" have little chance to realize it, save by the fortune which may place them on the necks of their fellows. The intellectual and the æsthetic are valuable, but not at the expense of those who have to pay for it without getting it. The 'spiritual' in this sense is the mark of an

aristocracy, itself not wrong where those who suffer from it have no desire to rise above their dead selves, but yet not the ideal of life unless it looks to the social and ethical virtues, which require no income or leisure for their practice, and unless it looks to time for attainment where materialism cuts it short at the grave. The intellectual's and the æstheticist's 'spiritual' is wanting in all that will inspire, though it is a thing that the great objects of inspiration must stimulate; but it is too closely affiliated with a philosophic conception which, though it calls itself idealistic, is not severed from the fundamental associations of materialism—namely, the ideals of physical knowledge and of art, things necessary both where nothing else can be won, and where all else can be won, but not possible where economic conditions forbid it. It is the ethical, the right attitude of mind toward the cosmos or God and his laws, that constitutes the 'spiritual' attainable in any condition of life whatever that is desired, and only immortality and God can give security against the vicissitudes and corrosive influences of doubt.

This point of view could be called ethical spiritualism, but it has never been dignified with such a name. If it had been, the distinction would be clear between the other uses of the term. They might sever-



ally be termed philosophical, scientific, and ethical spiritualism. The first characterized some of the Greek philosophers, and the whole of Christianity after them resorted to metaphysics for its defence. The second characterized the inception of Christianity, when it appealed to real or alleged facts, and became the dominant influence in certain classes of modern times when the philosophic and theological point of view lost power under the influence of scientific materialism. The third meaning represents the dominant practical spirit of Christianity and philosophic idealism, where materialism has had to yield to the ethical ideas of religion while undermining its philosophy. But with the first and third meanings or points of view, we have nothing to do here. It is common spiritualism with which we have to deal, and this can be called scientific only in respect of the appeal to fact, or communication with the dead as proof of survival, instead of to *a priori* reasoning. It has never been regarded as a scientific attitude of mind, and certainly much of its work since its alleged rise has offered nothing to entitle it to that dignified name. But in so far as its point of view is concerned, it is entitled to such a description of its function. While the philosophical point of view has succumbed to the triumphant spirit of science, psychic research claims sufficient

attention to recover for the ordinary spiritualism the right of investigation. Hence it is only this point of view that can receive notice here.

The use of the term spiritualism, then, varies somewhat in different countries and between different men. In America it is not a respectable term among philosophers and psychologists. It obtains the colour of its meaning from association with a despised sect, which has set up a rival propagandism with the Church. In Germany and France it has a philosophic recognition, and to some extent restores the usage which Kant once gave it, but is not associated with the particular ideas of those who make it only a belief in the communication with the dead. It rather combines the first and second meanings with a sceptical temper toward the claim of communication. Professor Flournoy uses 'spiritualism' in the older philosophic sense, and employs 'spiritism' for the scientific conception of communication, though not yet feeling convinced that 'spiritism' has sustained its claims. There is no objection to this use of the term, though it might conduce to better understanding with the English thinking public were this conception of it consistent with its habits. This, however, may be the fault of our deviation from Continental habits of thought, which are

truer to philosophic tradition. In this discussion, however, I must remain by the popular conception of the term 'spiritualism' among English-speaking peoples, if only to make clear the approach which we have to make to the problem.

The spiritualists, in the modern sense of the term, trace their origin to the Fox sisters of Hydesville, N.Y. There is no excuse for this view of their history except ignorance of all history. It is unfortunate that the writer of the article on 'Spiritualism' in the ninth and eleventh editions of *The Encyclopædia Britannica* perpetuates this delusion, though it is supposedly qualified by the term 'Modern.' It would have been far more intelligent to have traced it to Swedenborg, whose system was confessedly ascribed to communication with the dead, and obtained the serious consideration of Immanuel Kant as well as of a whole sect of people. But even this origin would have ignored far more ancient claims; as, however, these were not known to Swedenborg and his followers, it is right to give him the credit of prior claim to what was almost a discovery. Spiritualism at least obtained the status of philosophic recognition from such a man, whatever qualifications the scientist has to give his work from the influence of Swedenborg's own mind. There are evidences of other cases exhibiting similar



phenomena before his time, and history as well as legend has preserved traces of them during the whole period of the Middle Ages. But not even these times, or times far earlier, originated the phenomena and the belief in communication with the dead.

It was primitive *animism* that was really the origin of spiritualism, and this represents the religious belief of savages all over the globe at one time. One has only to read Tylor's *Primitive Culture* to see this. It survived everywhere in the form of 'ancestor worship,' a term which conceals in Western ideas the real nature of the belief. Those, however, who know the beliefs of China and Japan, which are called 'ancestor worship,' find in them nothing but spiritualism pure and simple, modified, of course, by national traditions and practices. But the primitive form which this worship took is found more or less intact among savages to-day who have not come sufficiently in contact with civilization to modify it, and it is connected with such frightful orgies or superstitions that it is hard even to discover its real meaning. Human sacrifices are a relic of it, and in the form of widow-sacrifice it remained long in nations that had abandoned much of their primitive ideas. It is noticeable that all the early great religions, such as Taoism, Buddhism, Brahmanism, and all philosophic systems everywhere, were revolts against

these primitive beliefs. They had to compromise with them usually for political safety and in the end modified them, but among common people some form of spiritualism has survived almost every attack; so that it is only ignorance to trace its origin to the Fox sisters. If intelligent people had not scouted the phenomena that occurred in their own families, it would not have been left to the ignorant followers and imitators of the Fox sisters to set up a new gospel from table-tipping and cracking toe-joints. Men will not have intelligent ideas on this matter until they abandon both respect and ridicule for the Fox phenomena. The conceptions with which their followers have surrounded the subject is the great obstacle to the serious consideration of what is really important in psychic research, and science cannot afford to let the ignorant classes pre-empt the view which is to be taken of this research.

It is nevertheless true that the phenomena which have been most emphasized in modern times, and especially during the period of the Fox sisters' performances and a long time afterward, were calculated to give a dubious conception of the problem. They were the alleged levitation of physical objects without contact, tying and untying mysterious knots, alleged escape from impossible cabinets, alleged penetration of matter by

matter, and various other alleged physical miracles. These took various forms in every case, each supposed to overcome the difficulties arising in the others. They lent themselves to easy imitation by conjuring, which was usually far superior in appearance to anything that the spiritualists could show, and yet was palpably illusion and publicly avowed as such. Soon after the Fox sisters had created sufficient interest, the conjurer began a course of public exhibitions, and second-rate performers of the same kind duped and mulcted the gullible innocents; until psychic research put an end to it, or at least reduced it in amount and opportunity, so that it no longer enjoys the immunity it once possessed.

We can then hardly attribute the origin of modern spiritualism to an intelligent attack on scepticism on the part of those who excited the first interest in it. But various circumstances combined to attract the attention of those who were not committed to the Church in their views either of religion or immortality. One of the first effects on religious belief of the very principle on which Western society was founded, namely, the idea of liberty, was to emancipate many of the leading minds from its thralldom without removing the interest in a future life on which Christianity rested. This class was willing to look in any direction for consola-



tion and hope when it could not receive assurance from the Church. It was this, and not the peculiarity of the Fox sisters' phenomena, that excited interest. Their vulgar performances would have aroused no enthusiasm but for the intensity of the interest of the human mind in a belief in a future life. They would have been dismissed as less curious even than conjuring but for the all-absorbing influence of what the Church had taught us to expect but could not prove. In the ever-growing success of the scientific method which never relied on faith of any kind but demanded proof in present experience, the reasoning mind would no longer trust authority or faith. It had 'to be shown,' as a Western phrase tersely puts it. The evidence of this is more clearly seen in the books of Judge Edmunds and Andrew Jackson Davis. Their work was surrounded with some respectability at least, whatever other judgment be passed upon it, and so was that of the Rev. Stainton Moses. Intelligence and probity more or less protected them, and the breath of scorn never succeeded in attaching moral reproach to their lives and doctrines. It was otherwise with the Fox sisters. Their reputation and their notoriety were due entirely to the tenacity with which ignorant and unidealistic people defended their phenomena, and to the ease with which they could be attacked by

intelligent and respectable people. The life of one of them at least became so saturated with debauchery, that people with moral ideals could not attach any value publicly to what might have been scientifically genuine. Those spiritualists who have always endeavoured to keep the memory of the Fox phenomena green, have had no sense of humour or of idealism in their devotion. They have been wholly ignorant of the influences which affect mankind when asked to accept a new gospel—namely, some moral idealism of belief and conduct in those that bring the message. It was this that gave Christianity its advantage and its durability. No fault of base living could be discovered in the history and behaviour of its founder. He stood in history as an ideal, and this regardless of all theories about his personality. Not so with the heroes of modern spiritualism among the vulgar classes. It is probable that there were some genuine psychic phenomena connected with the Fox sisters, but history is not going to preserve them. What history and tradition will know best about them is the immoral life associated with the phenomena and the records of real or alleged fraud in which the public of the intelligent sort was more ready to believe than in miracles. There will be no disposition to revise the verdict that has been put upon them, and

it would not be possible to do so if we desired. The confession of Margaret Lane Fox, though the circumstances make it worthless, will always remain a fatal obstacle to the hypothesis of anything genuine in her career, and it would have been wiser for spiritualists to have accepted the situation and to have allied their fortunes with something more ethical and ideal. Some of the later heroes of the movement were no better, and it cannot be expected of idealists that they should fall down and worship something less interesting and more illusory than conjuring. The course they have taken has so distorted the meaning of the term by which they denote their belief that intelligent people, at least in the Western continent, hardly dare use it in a favourable sense. Whatever of association it may have of correct method in respect to proof is lost by association with vulgarity and fraud, and even people just rising from uncultured conditions and insisting upon at least æsthetic ideals, would demand that so important a belief as immortality, so long under idealistic auspices, should be surrounded and protected by good taste and morality as well as scientific method.

There is abundant evidence, however, that the phenomena have characterized all ages; the Church was able to keep them in abeyance or in its service during its triumph,



and it was only the passing of its power that gave the subject the influence which it possesses to-day. Men are more interested in the future than they are in the past, and this is true without regard to any life beyond the grave. It is the future that absorbs the attention of every man and woman, even when he or she does not believe in immortality. It is only in an aristocratic age that the past has any special attraction, or if not in an aristocratic age, certainly in an aristocratic mind. The past is given us and we cannot modify it by any act of ours. It is different with the future. We can make that, if we have any assurance of the time in which to make it. All realization that depends on hope and the will makes no reckoning with the past except to ascertain the law of probabilities or the conditions of achievement in the future. It is the fruition of the future we all seek with a thousandfold as passionate an interest as we read history, and the human race cannot be robbed of this instinct without abortive development. It was the appeal to this beyond-the-grave belief that gave Christianity most of its influence, and this heritage was seized by its apostates when they turned to the claims of spiritualism for protection.

It is quite possible that the Fox sisters and other interested people, including such persons as Judge Edmunds and Andrew

Jackson Davis, would have received as little attention as similar types in the Middle Ages, or have been as ruthlessly suppressed, but for the wider and deeper impression that scepticism had made upon the dogmas of religion. As I have already remarked, sceptical minds were and are quite as much interested in human survival as any believer, only they are more careful about their evidence, and have more confidence in scientific methods and results than have either the religious mind or the untrained masses. Just in proportion as this scepticism retained its personal and its moral interest in survival, would it give attention to the claims of the spiritualists, and it was this that got the Fox sisters a hearing beyond the limits of the class to which they belonged, as well as the easier attack to which they were exposed than were men like Judge Edmunds and Davis. The literature of this period is full of books on the subject, both for and against, and many a writer had far better phenomena with which to support his claims, than most of those of the Fox sisters which history will preserve. But either because the facts were harder to refute and explain away, or because materialism was too strong to accept a reaction into supernaturalism, at any rate, the gauntlet was thrown down and the challenge accepted, and scepticism was finally

asked to face the organized effort of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882 to settle the controversy once for all.

Whatever we may think of the spiritualists and of the character of their facts, they were, in respect of method, much nearer science than were their antagonists in religion. They had turned away from tradition and dogma and toward actual experiment in the present for a belief. Whether the hope or endeavour was foolish or not has nothing to do with the spirit of the method. This was the interrogation of the present moment for the determination of belief. Hitherto religion had relied upon the past and its bequest for the fixing of the most important of all beliefs in its own estimation, and scorned all effort of the present to prove what it held as a faith. Spiritualism, on the contrary, insisted that it must find the proof in present human experience or it would join the ranks of the agnostics and materialists. Hence it would have been easy for it to form an alliance with science, at least in respect of the general principle of its method. But it forfeited its opportunity by the fanaticism of its beliefs, which were not less rigid and uncompromising toward strict scientific method than had been the general attitude of religion toward science in its inception. It maintained equal indifference or hostility to the ethical ideals of the



Church—without reflecting how much that body had fallen from grace in its use of them—and cultivated as much hatred toward scientific men as they maintained towards it. It did not see that it might divide with science the support of method, and attack it for want of an open mind. But it found in science as much of an enemy as it did in the Church, and had to do what it could between the upper and the nether millstone.

Its assemblies were the hustings for performances which ranged from the ravings of hysterics and deceptions of tricksters to the half-illiterate talks of people who, whatever of idealism they had, were not fit leaders of the intelligent public or even the entertainers of such. They were too slow to expel fraud from their ministers, and never saw that the cause of immortality has little or no importance unless associated with at least some moral idealism in the characters and teachings of their leaders. Twaddle in exhortation will not redeem messages from the dead anywhere except in the laboratory. A public educated in intellectual as well as artistic æsthetics will not be attracted to illiterate teachers in this age, and much less is it going to take its revelations from hysterical or uneducated bawlers, far less from frauds who can claim neither hysteria nor ignorance as apologies for their conduct.

It was this fatal situation that prevented spiritualism from invoking the interest of science earlier than it did. It fell to the intelligent agnostic to attack the problem in the face of three enemies, the devotee of tradition and dogma, the scientific materialist, and the despised spiritualists who were neither religious nor scientific.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROBLEM

WE resolved the meaning of the materialistic theory of human consciousness into the proposition that consciousness is a function of the brain or organism, and its evidential statement into the formula that consciousness in normal experience is always associated with physical structure, and with the absence of this organism no ordinary traces of its independent existence are found. This is to say that consciousness and organism are always associated, and that consciousness is not present when the organism disappears. This conception of the situation makes nothing of the nature of consciousness. It does not raise any questions about its nature, but only as to the fact of its connections. As already explained, the traditional schools of thought made the question of the soul depend on certain well-defined conceptions of what consciousness was, distinguishing it radically from physical phenomena. But materialism abandons this point of view and insists that



it is an open question as to *what* mental states are, while it is not an open question as to its associations and connections. Science investigates facts, or the uniformities of co-existence and sequence, and the nature of a thing is secondary to its being a fact. The consequence is that it asks for evidence that will appeal to all men and that will not be left to *a priori* opinions about the nature of mental states. It finds the universal fact that consciousness in normal experience is always connected with the physical body, and when that body dissolves after death consciousness ceases to manifest itself in the same way. It is but natural to suppose that, like other functions of the body, it has ceased to exist. The burden of proof, therefore, rests upon the man who believes that it is not a function of the organism.

The situation as defined by materialism requires its antagonist, spiritualism, to show that a particular individual consciousness has not ceased to exist, even if it cannot manifest in its old way. This is to say that we must get evidence that it exists in isolation from the body. In some way, therefore, this consciousness must get into communication with the living, and prove its personal identity by telling its memories to an extent that will make it scientifically clear that we are dealing with a surviving personality.

How this is to be done I do not mean for the present to explain. I am here only indicating the situation and the nature of the problem. It means nothing more nor less than the isolation of individual consciousness from its original associations, and communication with it to establish its personal identity. The necessity for this and for proving its identity is determined by certain facts which have greatly altered the problem for modern times.

With antiquity it sufficed to believe that we had a soul to decide the issue. But with a further and more careful analysis of the problem we distinguish between the soul and its activities, between the subject and its functional actions. We can conceive that a soul should survive without the consciousness of its identity. It is personal identity that interests us most. We want to know if we can retain memory of the past and consciousness of who we are. In other words, we have an interest in being the same that we were, and in remaining the same in the future, even if that identity be nothing else than the stream of consciousness with its recollections as the condition of the only identity that interests us. But modern psychology shows us that, whatever theory we take about the existence of a soul, it may change its personality so greatly as to lose even the sense of personal

identity, at least apparently. This is illustrated in the phenomena of secondary personality. Whether by accident or disease, many persons fall into an abnormal condition in which they have no recollection of their past, and go on living a new life without the slightest knowledge of what their past has been.

The Ansel Bourne case is a celebrated instance of this phenomenon. This man disappeared from home in Providence, Rhode Island, and no trace of him could be found. Eight weeks later he awakened out of an abnormal condition in a small town in another state, where he had been keeping a junk shop, and had no recollection of how he got there, or of the name by which he had called himself when there, namely, William Brown. He was hypnotized by Dr. Richard Hodgson and Professor William James, and in the state of hypnosis told the story of the eight weeks, but remembered nothing of it in his normal state. I have a case in which this secondary state continued for four years, and the man then awakened from it in almost precisely the same way that did Mr. Bourne.

There are many such cases. What they mean is that, whatever we say about the soul, or whatever we say about the brain and its identity, the functional activity of consciousness may be so different at different



times, as to appear to be a totally different personality. That is, the soul, if there be such, may so change its functional activity as to lose the consciousness of personal identity; and then the problem arises to determine whether death may not produce just such an alteration of personality as we see in cases such as that of Ansel Bourne and others. The consequence is that it does not satisfy to show that something more than the brain is required to prove that we survive in the manner which has a personal and moral interest for us. We have to ascertain if the soul has a memory of its past and retains a consciousness of its identity such as it normally does when living in association with the physical body. The consequence is that our problem is determined for us in this way. We must prove the survival of personal consciousness and its knowledge of personal identity.

It should be apparent to any scientific man what the method is which we have to pursue. I say 'scientific man,' because I am referring to the scientific problem, not the problems of philosophy and faith. Whether the philosophic and religious method be valid or not—and with these we have nothing to do here—it is clear what the scientific procedure must be. It must get into communication with the discarnate, if such exist, and obtain facts which will

prove survival of personal identity. The ways in which that may be possible may be examined again. There are certain preliminary questions to be briefly considered, which may be regarded as assigning limits to the confidence which the materialistic theory has in its conclusions. While that view rightly approaches the problem with the idea that it is a question of the facts of human experience, it assumes too positively that our knowledge of the real situation is clearer than is the case. What I wish to do, therefore, is to show that, at the very point where we are supposedly sure of certain facts, or, if this is not the way to express it, sure of what our knowledge is, we may have to qualify it by proving an amount of actual ignorance that is not at all assumed by the materialist about consciousness and its associations. I refer to the processes by which we obtain our assurance about the existence of consciousness in our normal experience. We forget that we have entirely different methods of determining when and where consciousness exists, one of them direct, and the other indirect; but the materialist neglects to consider what the indirect method means for the modification of the certitude with which he holds that consciousness is a function of the organism. Let us therefore approach the definition of our problem

by the various steps in normal experience which will lead us up to the method of ascertaining whether personal consciousness survives bodily death.

The first fact about which there can be no dispute is, that each man is *directly* aware of his own consciousness. I shall not enter into any nice definition of what *direct* knowledge is. I mean that a man is immediately aware that he is conscious. He cannot be argued out of this. Any attempt to dispute the fact involves the consciousness itself, so that scepticism can never be aroused against the personal existence of consciousness in the man who is himself conscious of his own mental states. Now the interesting thing is, that he has forms of mental activity which may not even be aware of the body which is the supposed organ of consciousness. The most conspicuous instances of this are certain dreams which we remember when we awaken. In them we have no knowledge of our bodies or their whereabouts. The next set of instances consists in cases in which we neglect the sensations which may accompany them, and think only of the inner reflective states which are not sensation. Then again, parts of our body are never accessible to the visual sense which is our best source of knowledge in this respect. Indeed, it would seem that knowledge even



of our body was more or less indirect. At any rate, without pushing this to extremes, it brings out the real gist of direct knowledge, by showing that it is the means of knowing that consciousness exists. We may not know *what* consciousness is, but we certainly know directly *that* it is. Our own existence is thus given beyond dispute, though we may not know what this existence is or even what its connections are. But that we are conscious cannot be disputed without undermining the materialistic theory as well as all others.

Now I have no direct knowledge that I have a *soul*, any more than I have a direct knowledge of my brain. I may have assurance that consciousness has a subject, that is, that the phenomenon of consciousness implies something that is conscious, but whether it is brain or a soul I do not directly know. The only absolutely assured thing is the fact of consciousness itself as an immediate object of my knowledge. As I have indicated, we may not have even a direct knowledge of the body which the materialist makes the basis of mental states, and we certainly are not directly assured of a soul.

But when it comes to saying that there is any other consciousness in the world than our own, the whole case is completely altered. We have a direct knowledge, as explained,

only of our own mental states. All knowledge, if knowledge it be at all, of the existence of any other consciousness in the world than our own is indirect and inferential. I do not know immediately, and in the same way that I know my own mental states, that any other external being or organism is conscious. I have to infer this from its behaviour. I know directly that consciousness accompanies my own actions, and when I observe similar actions directly in others, I infer that the same kind of cause or accompaniment is associated with them. I explain the actions by the same cause as that which I directly know in myself. But, so far as direct and immediate knowledge is concerned, I have no different evidence in kind of the existence of an external consciousness than I have of the cause of dew or rain. I have only indirect knowledge of foreign consciousness. I have to observe the physical movements of other organisms, and infer from them that consciousness accompanies them. My argument for it is an application of the teleological argument, as it is called, the argument from design. It is the same method as that which the theologian applied and applies to prove the existence of God or Divine Intelligence. The difference is only in the quantity of the evidence, or in the complications with which we have to reckon in the one case

that are not present in the other. In the case of human actions and accompaniments, they are more numerous, and the evidence is so plentiful in normal life that we have no doubt about an external intelligence, though our knowledge of it is not direct. But it is inferential and not immediate as it is in the awareness of our own consciousness.

The one important thing to deduce from these two phenomena is the fact that in my personal knowledge of myself I have a securer basis for the existence of consciousness than I have for that of my body; not that I feel any special doubt of the latter, but that there is no situation in which I can eliminate consciousness and retain any evidence for the existence of the bodily organism. It is the material world that is here subject to the judgment of consciousness, and my assurances are first for the mental and for the physical afterward. But when it comes to the knowledge of foreign consciousness it is the reverse. When I attempt to set up external consciousness my assurance of its existence is not so direct and ineradicable as is that of the material world or the body. That is, I am surer of another man's body than I am of his mind; or, if that is not precisely the correct way to speak, I can raise the question of doubt about his consciousness more easily than I can of his



body. The Cartesian philosophy made that position axiomatic, as it referred all animal action to mechanical processes and refused it the accompaniment of consciousness. And it is true even when we have abandoned the narrower application of Cartesian thought, that there are many phenomena in man and animal which imitate intelligence without either being evidence of it or being accompanied by it as we know intelligence introspectively. This fact only protects the assertion that our knowledge of external intelligence is not so ineradicable as that of the body which accompanies it when we know it. This is only to say that of ourselves self-consciousness is primary and knowledge of the body secondary, while in objective knowledge the primary consciousness is of the body, and the belief or knowledge of the accompaniment of consciousness is secondary and indirect.

The materialist does not often bethink himself of this difference and of the fact that it indicates limitations of the assurance with which he may assert the dependence of consciousness on the organism. He assumes too readily that we are as well assured of external as we are of internal consciousness, and that the evidential problem is simpler than is the fact. He forgets that the situation leaves an open question where he thinks the issue closed, and how-

ever true his maxim may be about the observed relation of consciousness to physical structure, the absence of evidence for survival is not evidence for the absence of survival. We may press on him, too, the evidential question. He may take up the agnostic position from the rule of bodily and mental connections, but this is not proving that consciousness does not survive. It may prove that we lack satisfactory evidence, but it does not supply evidence for denial of its independent existence. To this idea we may have to return again, and I allude to it now only to summarize the meaning of the situation in the two cases discussed.

We may go further with illustrations that make the case still stronger than we have thus far made it. All that we have suggested by normal life is the fact that we are not assured of external consciousness in the same way that we are of self-consciousness. Now there are situations in which external consciousness may actually exist and yet betray no evidence at the time of the fact. When self-consciousness suspends or disappears we have no knowledge of anything whatever. For us, all is annihilated. But we have cases in which, self-consciousness surviving, so to speak, we are aware of external bodies in an inert condition, and with no evidence that consciousness of any

kind is there. Paralysis and catalepsy are illustrations of this. Many such cases have occurred in which those who know something about death (which means the disappearance of consciousness from its bodily associations) come to the conclusion that the person is dead. This means the permanent suspension of bodily consciousness, whether its fortune be one of survival or annihilation. In a number of cases, however, people have recovered normal consciousness and testified to the fact that they knew all along of events which we supposed could not be known. I have personally witnessed cataleptic instances of this, and there are authentic cases of paralysis in which normal consciousness came back to prove that knowledge was present where we thought it was absent. The situation was quite different from what we first supposed. We inferred that consciousness was absent or non-existent because the evidence was absent or non-existent. But the recovery came to remind us that our inference was wrong, and that consciousness may exist without immediate evidence of it. Such instances offer us an experiment in which we discover that while it is the bodily movements that are the evidence of external consciousness, their cessation is *not* evidence that consciousness has ceased, but only evidence that it cannot prove its existence,



if it still subsists. It is the evidence of external consciousness that has ceased in paralysis and catalepsy, and this cessation of evidence is not evidence of its cessation. The case remains open. No doubt we are not entitled to believe that it continues under the circumstances, but no more are we justified in saying that it does not.

It is conceded that the case against materialism is not complete in any such illustrations. It still has the resource of the hypothesis, and it is nothing more than an hypothesis, that, though motor action has ceased, the brain may still continue to function in consciousness without resulting in the motor action necessary to prove its continuance. That position, as an hypothesis, is unanswerable until we can prove that consciousness actually survives the permanent dissolution of the body. Whether that can be done is not the question at present, but only a clear conception of the evidential situation for both sides, and that means the limits of our knowledge of the facts. These limits are, so far as these illustrations are concerned, that we cannot be assured either of continuance or discontinuance of consciousness unless we have situations quite different from those described. We have to keep conviction in abeyance.

But there is one clear conclusion from paralysis and catalepsy, and that is that we cannot infer the cessation of consciousness from the cessation of the evidence of consciousness. This is demanding as much agnosticism of materialism as it asks of spiritualism. We may go farther, however, in limiting the possibility for materialism to prove its denial of survival, if it goes so far as this and abandons the more humble position of agnosticism. We may concede that the presumptions lie on the side of the evidence always, and that the evidence taken from normal life alone establishes such a known relation between consciousness and the organism that we have no right to the belief in survival, however much we may prefer it or hope for it. But that is as far as materialism can carry us. It has one special weakness when it endeavours to assert the certainty against survival. It has to face the fundamental axiom of all proof ultimately. The position taken in regard to self-consciousness as the primary source of assured knowledge shows that all reasonings, inductive or deductive, come back to this basis for assurance of any kind in any belief. You cannot prove the *pons asinorum* to an idiot. The subject to whom the proof is presented must have the capacity to see it. That is, ultimately proof is *seeing* a truth or proposition, realizing it in our own

self-consciousness, or it cannot be believed at all. Now the evidential situation is such that the materialist cannot prove his doctrine at all, if he goes so far as to deny survival. He may prove that all or the best evidence from normal life is for agnosticism or suspense of judgment, but he cannot say that he is *conscious* of his coming annihilation. He can only infer it from the truth of his hypothesis, and that is always contingent on a knowledge of the relation between consciousness and the organism, which he must confess he does not have; and as long as the cessation of the evidence for the existence of consciousness is not evidence of the cessation of consciousness, he will have to admit that he can have no assured inferential knowledge of annihilation. He remains where he does not know. The fact of annihilation would also cut him off from proof, because he should have to survive to be conscious of his non-survival! An Irish bull would hardly go so far. If he is conscious after the body disappears his theory is refuted. If he is not conscious it cannot be proved, because there is no mind to see the proof. Hence the utmost that we can rationally reach is agnosticism, until we die, when we may have a chance to prove survival, but none to prove annihilation.

All this means that there is no way of assuring ourselves that materialism is true or



provable. It may be the only legitimate hypothesis from the standpoint of normal evidence; but that is not equivalent to scientific proof. It means that the problem is an open one, and that we are always in a position to examine any new evidence that may present itself for the modification of materialism or the disproof of it. It clearly indicates what the evidential problem is for deciding the issue, and that is the isolation of an individual consciousness, if that be possible, as the only way to settle it on this side of the grave. Materialism cannot be proved here or hereafter. It can only say non-proven on the basis of normal experience, and if it refuses to look at any other experience it closes the door to investigation and takes the position of dogmatism, which is wholly unscientific. We are certain of the disappearance of the human organism, and we must remain totally ignorant of survival if we refuse to admit the possibility or the fact of communication with the dead, which is the only hope of scientific evidence for a future life. I am not concerned in this remark to say whether any such thing as communication with the dead be either possible or desirable. That has to be determined by other considerations. I am only indicating the method necessary to arrive at any but an agnostic attitude of mind toward survival by any man who knows what

science and scientific method are in the attainment of any certainty in any matter whatsoever.

Whether we have any facts to which such a method can be applied is not the question in this chapter. We are merely outlining the problem and not assuming or deciding that it is soluble. It is merely a question whether science can conceive a method of studying the problem. The spiritualists have all along affirmed the existence of the phenomena, and whether admissible or not as alleged, it is certainly possible to ascertain whether they are facts or not, and we may then examine their relevance to the claims made regarding their explanation. But apart from all this, nothing is clearer than the fact that materialism cannot assure itself beyond the agnostic verdict. It can only say that there is no evidence for survival in normal experience, and await the claims of supernormal experience for consideration in the same connection.

The real difficulties of the problem begin with the estimation of the evidence. Mankind has been accustomed to appeal to every new fact as evidence for something mysterious. Anything outside its familiar experience took on the character of the inexplicable, and in many cases was regarded as miraculous. The spiritualists seized upon certain classes of these pheno-

mena as proofs of the action of spirits. They especially appealed to the alleged movements of physical objects without contact, and the phenomena of alleged levitation and similar physical inexplicabilities, such as the 'materialization' of physical objects so called, whether of persons or things. But they also included apparitions, mind-reading, mediumistic phenomena, raps and knockings which purported to be communications from the dead, clairvoyance, the supernormal perception of concealed objects, including dowsing or the finding of water and minerals, automatic writing, inspirational speaking, genius, or any unusual phenomenon that did not easily and quickly lend itself to ordinary explanation.

The first thing for the scientific man is to explain all new facts consistently with what he already knows. This is usually called seeking a 'natural' explanation. But the term 'natural' has now lost all the significance that made it antagonistic to the idea of spirit, and hence it serves no useful purpose in controverting the purposes of psychic research. But what is often or always intended by its employment may be legitimate enough, and that is to make the familiar the standard of explanation. It is unity in the world that we seek, constancy and uniformity of events, as a means of prevision and the adjustment of our conduct.



If the phenomena of 'nature' were always miraculous and incalculable, we should have no means of assuring rational thought and conduct for ourselves. Hence the term 'natural' has come to mean the uniform and constant, and not necessarily the physical. When employed to indicate that our standard at first in the explanation of facts must be the familiar, it denotes just what the man of scientific mind must always assume. He may find that there are phenomena that do not fall under the forms of the familiar in ordinary experience, and in many events, whether physical or mental, he finds this to be the case, even when he has no reason to make them miracles so-called. Hence when it comes to the claim for the interference of spirits in the order of 'nature' or normal experience, his first duty is to exhaust the explanations with which he is most familiar, before admitting the existence and intrusion of anything presumably so extraordinary as discarnate spirits. But there is one limitation to this duty, and this is that it be carried out without undue prejudice, or without any prejudice at all. The prejudices are not all on the side of the 'supernatural.' They are quite as strong on the side of the 'natural,' and there has to be as much impartial investigation into this as into exceptional events. It is only the interests of constancy in nature that make it im-

perative to go slowly in the admission of irregular and capricious causes. Many of the fundamental conditions of rational conduct require fixed laws in order that volitions may have hope of fruition, while a capricious order of the world would often defeat the most imperative commands of conscience. Hence much can be said against views that reinstate caprice in the order of the cosmos.

But there are other interests also besides regularity, and they are such as are connected with moral ideals and free action. Consequently, whether we call spirits 'natural' or 'supernatural' things, they may have a place in the world regardless of any assumed capriciousness in their action. We are not bound to the familiar beyond the needs of ethical idealism. There would have been no necessity, however, of mediating between two types of thought in this way, but for the extravagances of both against each other. The truth lies somewhere between the two. But the first duty of the scientific method in trying to solve the problem is to exhaust familiar explanations and to extend them as far as they will reach. It must discriminate in the evidence.

This duty requires it to define carefully what would be evidence for the existence of discarnate spirits, and then measure the relation of other facts to this supposition by

that given standard. Now I have shown that the only effective answer to materialism is communication with the dead, and communication with the dead can be determined only by two conditions : (1) by the existence of supernormal knowledge ; (2) by this supernormal knowledge being in the form of incidents which would be memories of their earthly life if spirits actually survived. These two conditions must be satisfied. They could be subdivided into subordinate types of phenomena, but that is not necessary here. The exclusion of normal explanations and the convergence of the facts upon memories which the dead would have if they retained their personal identity, are the two ways of determining the standard of the spiritistic theory. Whether it can ever be satisfied is not the question here, but only the formal conditions of satisfying it.

Now this standard enables us to cast out of consideration as evidence a number of groups of phenomena which the spiritualists have always regarded as evidence of their theory. The first group is all those physical phenomena which are associated with the contact of any person supposedly the medium of communication, or of the effect of such contact. In all these cases unconscious muscular action may give rise to phenomena that are not voluntarily produced by the subject, and we are so familiar with un-



conscious muscular action in many of the ordinary affairs of life that we have no assurance of foreign interference. The next group consists of all those mental phenomena which are evidently not related to the personal identity of the dead. Here we have the whole field of the subconscious and secondary personality, as they are called. By these we mean the mental states which occur without the ability to control them by attention, and of which we ourselves are as much spectators as we would be of the acts of others; or even those evidently mental phenomena that occur when we are wholly unconscious, such as hypnotic states and actions or trance phenomena not suggesting the supernormal. There are persons like Ansel Bourne, mentioned above, who live out a life of which they have no normal consciousness. All these phenomena of the subconscious life or secondary personality must be excluded from the evidence for spirits. These include inspirational speaking, whether it be in or out of a trance. Then comes the mental coincidences between the living that have been classified as mind-reading, thought-transference or telepathy. Following these will be the apparitions of the living, of which there seem to be authentic instances; the phenomena of dowsing, of finding lost articles by clairvoyance, as it is sometimes called, or perhaps better telæ-

thesia, the perception of physical things and events, not obtainable by telepathy or by any normal impressions on sense, if such things exist. One might add also all physical phenomena whatsoever of a real or alleged supernormal character, and unaccompanied by mental phenomena suggestive of intelligence beyond that of the subject which might cause them. Then there is the large field of chance coincidences, fraud, phenomena due to hyperæsthesia in certain subjects, subconscious perceptions, guessing, whether conscious or subconscious, suggestion, hints and inferences by suggestion, restoration of forgotten memories, etc. All these have to be eliminated before we admit even the supernormal, and even when the supernormal is admitted, all those types of it as well which are not constituted out of incidents bearing upon the personal identity of the dead, have to be excluded from the evidence.

It is quite possible that explanation by means of spirits may extend over many phenomena which are not evidence of their existence and action. But that must be determined after we have reason to believe that such agencies exist, and hence other possible explanations must be suspected until that of the discarnate is proved. I fully agree that many of the so-called 'natural' explanations are not explanations at all. They are but names for unknown

causes. Telepathy is one of them, clairvoyance is another, suggestion is still another. They are but terms for classifying phenomena, not for explaining them. They are useful in determining the evidential but not the causal problem. This is often or nearly always forgotten by those who are loth to admit the existence and agency of spirits. But they will have to come to this admission, that they are not explanatory in any sense in which science has to use them, namely, that of familiar causes. They are names for the unknown, and all scientific explanation must appeal to the known. This is an axiom, and telepathy, clairvoyance, suggestion, dowsing, many of the appeals to the subconscious, are all subterfuges for escaping other possibilities and deceiving the public. They serve to protect the pretence of knowledge where the ignorance is as great or greater than the appeal to spirits. But nevertheless they are legitimate as means of limiting the evidence and suggesting that we may find some explanation which does not require an appeal to the discarnate. They are at least good means for postponing judgment where many people want to appeal hastily to the transcendental, and in this too they are legitimate enough. But they can never be pressed as putting an end to further inquiry, as is the habit of the contented opponents of the discarnate



to indicate or imply. Hence the fundamental problem is to find supernormal evidence of the personal identity of the dead in order to assure us of their continued existence. Whether there is any such evidence, however, is not the issue in this discussion of method.

## CHAPTER V

### TELEPATHY

IT was apparently the phenomena of Cumberland and Bishop that first suggested the investigation of mind-reading, or thought-transference, which is what is meant by the term 'telepathy.' But their alleged mind-reading was either nothing but muscle-reading, or so closely allied to it, that neither in method nor in results was it impressive for the scientific man. Besides, there were other and more reliable facts that suggested it. Bishop and Cumberland were professionals, and their performances so nearly resembled those of mountebanks and adventurers, that perhaps no serious attention would have been given them but for more impressive facts of a wholly different type in respect of method. Such as they were, however, they attracted the attention of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research, and were the first to receive investigation. It is not probable that they were the chief interest of its members, but they tended to excite less ridicule than the

claims of spiritualism, and might be used to modify that belief; at least, the later history of telepathic hypotheses suggest this situation. In the course of the first eleven years' work, and to a less extent since that time, the Society accumulated a vast number of facts, both spontaneous and experimental, which indicated some unusual connection between living minds not due to the ordinary processes of sense-perception, whatever they were. The spontaneous incidents were of the type which represented A as getting the thoughts of B more or less simultaneously with the occurrence of those thoughts in B, and at various distances, sometimes near and sometimes far. The experimental results were those in which A thought of certain objects, scenes, or ideas, and B recorded his impressions. Sometimes A drew figures and B was to draw what came into this mind. The coincidences were frequent enough to show that chance coincidence and guessing were not the explanation. To certain types of them, 'involuntary whispering' was the objection raised. The experiments of Lehman and Hansen were designed to maintain this theory against telepathy when agent and percipient were near each other. They were criticizing some experiments by the Sidgwicks, and to test their own hypothesis they repeated the experiments under



the same conditions, and found the results were not beyond chance coincidence. They then stood in the foci of microphones, and found that the results were more than chance coincidence would explain. They then maintained that consciousness unconsciously affected the vocal muscles sufficiently to produce the same type of vibration in the throat that the voice would produce, and that these vibrations were magnified by the microphones sufficiently to produce a subliminal impression in the percipient, and this emerged in consciousness without any normal sensory knowledge of the stimulus. While this was an entirely legitimate objection to certain kinds of experiments, when agent and percipient were near each other, it did not apply to many other types of phenomena and experiment. It was therefore thought that the facts on the whole justified the hypothesis of telepathy. We cannot go into the evidence for it, or give detailed illustrations. The detailed reports of eleven years' observations and experiments cannot be even summarized in the space at our disposal. Readers will have to go to the original data for these. Personally I regard the evidence quite adequate for such a thing as telepathy, mind-reading, or thought-transference. To me it seems scientifically proved.

But the real question is : What has really been proved ? It is not enough to say that telepathy has been proved. The important inquiry is : What is telepathy ? It was a mere word for the facts which suggested or illustrated phenomena that could not be explained in ordinary ways. But this was not the feeling of either the public or of many who were engaged in the collection of evidence. It was defined as the 'transmission of thought independently of the recognized channels of sense,' and then used as a process to limit the evidence of spiritistic intervention, or to explain away the phenomena regarded as spiritistic, when they were of the mediumistic and mental type. This latter step was going beyond the evidence. It gave an explanatory import to the term when its primary meaning was purely descriptive. Here began all the troubles of psychic researchers with the scientific man. The layman at once began to use telepathy to explain the most marvellous phenomena, whether they were proved to be facts or not, and men like Thomson Jay Hudson found in it a universal resolvent for all the mysterious coincidences of mind. In his conception of it, telepathy was almost a substitute for gravitation ! It could do anything as infinite as that. It was a process of reading any and all living minds at will, selecting

memories therefrom to suit any purpose the mind chose, and all this subconsciously done!

It has been this sort of use of the term that has excited the ridicule of the scientific man. Recently a strong controversy has sprung up among advocates and opponents of telepathy, some of the scientific sceptics taking the radical position that there was no evidence whatever for telepathy. These antagonists of it did not make clear what they were opposing, not having defined clearly what they were talking about any more than the advocates of it. They no doubt had in mind the popular conception of it as a more or less infinite process of reading other persons' minds subconsciously and at will, which is the prevalent idea, and unfortunately encouraged by many a psychic researcher who should have known better. What, then, is telepathy? What is 'mind-reading' or thought-transference, for which I think there is adequate evidence?

The one most important thing to remember about telepathy is that it is only a name for facts. It is not a name for an explanatory process. It does not hint even remotely at any known process whatever. If it had not been for the hasty desire to get rid of spirits in supernormal phenomena, it is probable that no misunderstanding of the term would have arisen. It was entirely



the assumption that it was a substitute for certain real or alleged spiritistic causes that gave currency to the explanatory implication of the term. Perhaps the use of the term 'transmission' in defining it helped this view into currency. The original definition was as I gave it above, namely, 'the transmission of thought independently of the recognized channels of sense.' Perhaps the terms 'channels of sense' tended to make us think that the process was central or otherwise than through even supernormal functions or sensory processes. But in whatever way equivocation might be due to these terms, the qualification 'recognized' was enough to remove it, and the whole definition but described the facts. It did not name a cause or a known process, or indicate anything about the directness of the transmission. This last was assumed in the desire to limit spiritistic hypotheses.

The definition which I should adopt for telepathy is that it denotes coincidences between two living persons' thoughts, which are not due to chance coincidence or to normal sense perception. This is a negative definition, and I intend it as such. I do not think we know anything whatever of the process or what the cause is. I merely think that the coincidences are due to a cause, and a cause not discoverable by

normal sense perception. But I do not believe that we have any evidence whatever as to what the special cause is that would account for the coincidences. So far as present knowledge is concerned, the phenomena simply exclude chance and normal sensory processes. The term is thus only a name for the facts that baffle normal explanations, and indicate our ignorance, not our knowledge. The term does not explain or name any process that would explain. It only classifies a group of facts which cannot be used as evidence for spiritistic agencies. The primary condition of a spiritistic hypothesis, as we have already shown, is that the phenomena should clearly illustrate the personal identity of deceased persons. But many of the mental coincidences which suggest or prove telepathy, represent nothing but the identity of the living, or are not memories which deceased persons might be expected to give. The coincidences are between living persons' thoughts, not between the living and the dead. The term thus limits evidence, it does not explain. It stands for facts, not for known causes. This is the only meaning of the term which I think scientifically legitimate. This conception of the facts I think proved.

This opens the way to consider those conceptions of the term which I think are not proved. In the exigencies of limiting

the evidence for spiritistic theories people have assumed various things about the process. The first is that the communication is direct between living minds, which means that the consciousness of one living mind acts in some way directly on the mind of another. This assumption is wholly different from that which defines the coincidences as causal rather than casual and supernormal rather than normal, and it requires independent evidence for itself. But I contend that there is no scientific evidence whatever that thought is directly transmitted from one living mind to another. There has been no attempt even to investigate this problem. There may be no better hypothesis, but that is another question. We are not obliged to have hypotheses. We may prefer to express ignorance and to wait for further investigations. On this matter of direct telepathy between living people, I prefer to take this course. All that we know is that the coincidences are not due to chance or normal sense perception. The appeal to mysterious subconscious processes does not alter the case. They are quite as unknown as any telepathy can be, and I shall have occasion to take this up in a moment. I am here dealing with those coincidences which cannot possibly be referred to any subconscious processes closely allied to the normal, and so have in mind



distances which exclude even the subconscious, except such as would be convertible with telepathy. What I am denying is the evidence for the directness of the process. I do not deny that it may be a direct process. I am too ignorant to deny this. All that I am insisting upon is that we have no evidence whatever of a scientific sort that telepathy is directly between the living. There may be no other legitimate hypothesis, but that makes no difference.

We may legitimately enough assume this directness of telepathy between living people when trying to convert the sceptic to the spiritistic theory, if we happen to believe that view. But this is not granting the truth of it. It is merely a concession to his prejudices for the sake of presenting facts which do not consist with it. We may stretch such a view till it breaks, but this does not commit us to a belief in it as a fact. When it is a dispute between two forms of credulity, so to speak, we may concede direct processes between the living for the sake of cautiousness or of converting another to another theory when the facts do not fit this supposition; but assuming a possibility for the sake of conversion is not admitting a fact as an explanation. Psychic researchers have made this great mistake and assumed to be a fact what is only a conceivable possibility. They have not pro-

duced any evidence for the directness as a fact, but have tried to pacify scepticism, throwing a sop to Cerberus by trying its credulity in the name of the supposedly 'natural.' But wise is the scientific man who will not be caught in that trap.

A second conception of it is that some sort of vibrations, perhaps ethereal, carry thoughts from one person to another. But there is absolutely no evidence whatever that consciousness is either vibration or in any way connected with vibration. It may be this for all that we know, but there is no scientific evidence for it. It was perhaps the relation of speech to sound undulations and the communication of thoughts by this means that suggested such a view of telepathy. But we do not communicate thoughts by speech. Language is only symbolical and does not communicate thoughts. People with different languages or symbols cannot communicate with each other at all. We have first to agree, in some way, upon what a symbol shall mean, and then interpret these symbols. Thoughts are not transmitted. They only occur 'in our heads,' so to speak, and agreement on symbols enables us to infer what others think. If thought were vibration—and it may be for all that I know—it might be transmitted from mind to mind, but we have no evidence either that it is vibration or that it is or could be

transmitted if it were vibration. We are again perfectly ignorant of what it is.

A third analogy which is frequently used is that of wireless telegraphy. The mystery of this process is supposed to lie in the absence of the usual medium for transmitting wireless messages. But the analogy is a wholly mistaken one. Thoughts are never transmitted by wireless telegraphy any more than by any telegraphy. Again, the whole process is one of agreement on mechanical symbols of ideas, and telegraphy, whether wireless or otherwise, transmits only mechanical effects, and these are interpreted at the other end of the line. Without the agreed symbols neither wireless nor other telegraphy would transmit messages or thoughts. Besides, it is not supposedly without a medium of transmission for mechanical effects, any more than the ordinary telegraphy is. In wireless we suppose the ether to be the medium instead of a metallic wire. Consequently there is no scientific ground for using either vibrations or wireless analogies for making telepathy intelligible, whether direct or indirect. It may be that such processes are facts. I do not know, and science has produced no evidence for the fact. The term telepathy thus remains only as a name for facts and is not an explanation.

As long as it is not explanatory it will not



be a rival hypothesis of spirits in any situation whatever. We shall see later why spirits explain certain types of phenomena, whether the proof be adequate or not. But telepathy serves only as a means of curtailing the evidence. It classifies and describes; it does not explain. But those who apply it to the phenomena which at least superficially suggest spirits, not only use it as an explanation, but wholly distort the meaning with which they started their inquiries. The conception of telepathy as a direct process had the advantage of two things: (1) the fact that the coincidences were not evidence of the identity of the dead; and (2) that the phenomena conformed to the law of stimulus, as possibly indicated in the dynamic influence of one mind on another. The coincidences were between two present and active mental states, so that one mental state seemed to act like any other stimulus on the mind of another. The consciousness of the agent seemed to act on the mind of the percipient like any stimulus on a sensorium. It is true that we had and have no scientific evidence, perhaps no evidence of any kind, that consciousness thus acts dynamically at a distance. The nearest we know of its dynamic or causal action is on the organism of the subject, both by the will and unconsciously, or in a reflex manner on the various functions of the body.

But as for dynamic influence on minds at a distance we have no evidence at all; and even if we had, the law of it shows no resemblance to any of the laws of the distribution of energy as we know them. But the coincidences in telepathy at least resemble and suggest such causal action. However, they involve only the present active mental states, and there is no evidence that the subconscious states act on any other minds.

Now it is peculiar to the extension of telepathy which many writers and thinkers have given to the process, that it directly involves the idea either that the subconsciousness of the agent acts on the percipient, or the subconsciousness of the percipient reaches out, so to speak, and selects from the mind of others what is necessary for its purposes. As to the subconsciousness acting as a stimulus on the percipient, we have no evidence whatever. The coincidences may suggest that in some cases, but they not only do not prove it, but many of them are not coincidences with the contents of the subconsciousness of the person supposed. Thus A is a sitter with a psychic, and receives incidents which he or she does not know, but which are found to be true of the alleged communicator. But they are verified by some living friend of the communicator at a distance, so that the

application of telepathy to the facts must assume that the subconsciousness of a distant person acts just at the right time to stimulate the percipient to complete a system of facts of which only a part is known by the sitter. Or are we to suppose that all mental states whatsoever of the living are telepathically imprinted on other living minds so that the sitter is the reservoir of all the thoughts of all living people, and these can act on the psychic in the right order to stimulate or impersonate the dead? There is no evidence whatever for either hypothesis. Indeed, we cannot tell anything about when the subconscious acts, or whether it does so at all, on other minds. We cannot establish a coincidence with it, or we cannot establish its coincidence with any other mental state in other minds. It is impossible to experiment with it in that direction. It is only the imagination that supposes the subconscious to have any such powers, and there is not one iota of evidence for it.

We are then left to the supposition that the percipient *selects* subconsciously from the subconscious minds of others what it wants, and represents the source to be spirits of the dead rather than the minds of the living. But this hypothesis totally changes the fundamental conception of telepathy. That term originally expressed or implied



that the process conformed to the law of stimulus. It was A acting on B, and not B selecting from A. This new conception reverses the process and abandons the law of stimulus, and this without any evidence whatever. There can be no doubt about the selective nature of the facts reproduced in mediumship, so that it is only a question of who or what does the selecting. But a selective telepathy must assume an infinite intelligence to discriminate rightly between all other memories of the sitter, and also all other memories of all living people, and then give us confused and erroneous statements about the right ones. It always goes in the right direction, and is so intelligent that it must know where it gets its facts, but always lies about where it gets them. Now there is not one iota of evidence for this selective process by the living mind. It is pure imagination and gratuitous assumption. We not only have no evidence that the connection is direct, but we have also no evidence that it is selective by the assumed percipient.

The psychic researcher who assumes or presses telepathy to explain the majority of mediumistic phenomena is doing so without any rational reason whatever, and it is no wonder that the scientific man is sceptical of such methods or hypotheses. Coincidences that are not due to chance he can under-

stand, but an infinitely selective process without any causal analogies in experience defies rational thinking, and no one with any sense of humour or scientific intelligence would be tempted with it, except as an escape from the existence of spirits in whom it is not respectable to believe, though it is respectable to pretend that you are seeking to believe in them. No intelligent person would be tempted by such an hypothesis for any other reason. Nor am I either assuming or defending the spiritistic theory by this criticism of telepathy. There may be no adequate evidence for it either; but this fact does not make the infinite extension of telepathy without evidence any the more scientific. We may be entitled to imagine any indefinite extension of it so as to gain assurance for any other theory by making telepathy appear preposterous; but while this is perfectly justifiable, we should never permit the process to delude our own intellects or to exempt us from the obligation to procure evidence that the extension is scientifically supported.

I do not need to dwell on the objections to telepathy which arise from alleged instances of it where muscle-reading, suggestion, and various sub-conscious stimuli may give rise to coincidences that might be unusual. I am keeping in mind those instances where distance and adequate protection exclude

unconscious whispering and other sources of normal perception. Scepticism has its rights, especially when its motive is to ascertain the correct conception of things. It is easy and often delusive to build up a large philosophy on a few facts or inadequately proved facts, and here it is that scepticism performs as important a service as belief. It is the corrective of delusions; so that I am not defending the supernormal in the interests of any theory. Parties have been quite as prejudiced on both sides of this problem as they are in politics, and we are here interested only in demanding dispassionate consideration for facts and clear thinking in regard to them.

The phenomena of nature are not all of the same type. Even within the compass of terms which name special groups there are differences that shade off into other types of phenomena; and the case is not wholly with those who select special instances and endeavour to force all others into that mould. Unconscious whispering, suggestion, hyperæsthesia, and other similar delicate conditions of sense perception lie between the rougher processes of knowledge and the more recondite, or may even shade into telepathy. But the extremes between hearing a bell a hundred feet distant and hearing one in Germany when you are in the Mississippi valley, do not admit of classification together.



It is these extreme instances that invite attention, and whether we call them chance hallucinations, illusions, or telepathy, they are not to be classed with normal experiences. Spontaneous and experimental incidents are numerous enough to justify the use of some term to describe them. Perhaps the term 'telepathy' implies too much regarding the process implied in the result, and if so I should be satisfied with any other which did not create worse illusions about the facts. In any case, however, the term does nothing more than name or describe the facts. It offers no explanation whatever of them.

Let us then summarize the status of telepathy as an hypothesis. (1) It is nothing but a name for facts, for mental coincidences excluding chance, guessing, and normal sense perception. (2) It is not a causal explanation of anything whatever, even of the mental coincidences described. We know absolutely nothing about the process involved, whether 'brain waves,' ethereal undulations, or other conditions exist to make transmission possible; and even if they did exist the case would not be any the more intelligible. (3) We do not know whether the process of transmission is direct between the living or involves some *tertium quid* or third agent to carry the message. Our knowledge is so limited in the matter that this hypothesis

is as good as any to account for the facts. (4) The only telepathy for which we have any scientific evidence whatever is connected with the *present active mental* states of the supposed agent and those of the percipient. There is no scientific evidence that it is primarily or exclusively a subconscious affair initiated and carried out by the percipient. The evidence connects it with the apparent stimulus of the agent's thought. (5) The telepathy which assumes that the percipient *selects* desired information from the subconsciousness of a person present has no scientific evidence whatever for itself. Yet this has been assumed in order to eliminate other hypotheses. (6) The still further extended telepathy which assumes that a percipient can at any time gain access by subconscious action to the subconsciousness of any person at any distance, or of all living persons and select what is necessary for its purpose, has absolutely no evidence whatever, scientific or otherwise, for its assumed action. It has nothing but the imagination of people who have no scientific knowledge to support it. It will be conceivable when it produces at least an iota of evidence in its favour.

All this shows that telepathy is not only nothing but a name for certain facts requiring to be explained, but also that we have only a *negative* conception with which to deal.

By this I mean that we conceive it, not by what it is, but by what it is not. It is not a normal process of gaining information, and that is all we know about it. The consequence is that we cannot use it for explaining anything. Human intelligence never explains anything by what it does *not* know, but by what it *does* know. Telepathy represents what we do not know in terms of a process, and hence is worthless for scientific explanations. It can only classify facts which limit evidence for other hypotheses, and it can do no more.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE SURVIVAL OF PERSONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

ONE of the curious things in this discussion is the violent antagonism which the scientific man displays toward the possibility of surviving consciousness. If he is an out-and-out materialist, he ridicules such a supposition, and rightly enough, if his own theory of consciousness be true. But he ought to see that he has no absolute proof that consciousness is a function of the brain. To prove it he would have to show that, when the body perishes, consciousness is annihilated. This he has not done and cannot do. All the evidence, as we have seen, from normal experience suggests his view, but it does not prove it scientifically. He must give us the same proof that the consciousness is annihilated as he gives that the physical organism dissolves. But he never faces the fundamental issue that the present existence of consciousness is quite as mysterious as any supposed future existence of it. It is no more impossible for consciousness to exist in the future than it is at present. The

materialist does not know enough about atoms or ions and electrons to predict the existence of consciousness from that knowledge. It is not an implication of any knowledge we have or suppose regarding them. If we cannot infer the necessity of consciousness from atoms or any other physical units in the world, we certainly cannot infer its annihilation from the dissolution of the relation between atoms. It is merely a question of fact, of evidence, whether consciousness is a function of the organism and whether it survives. The necessities of the matter have long since been banished from scientific speculations.

The question, then, is whether we have any evidence that the soul or personal consciousness survives bodily death. I have indicated that I think we have abundant evidence for the existence of telepathy, but that I do not regard it as explaining anything, much less the character of the facts which suggest survival after death. There remains, then, to ask if we have evidence of this survival. It is not whether we have a soul or not, because I regard that question as bound up with the problem of surviving consciousness. If we had a soul other than the brain, of course, it would not follow that it perished when the body did, but it would also not follow that personal consciousness would survive with this soul. It might be

exceedingly probable that it would survive when the soul did, but it is not a necessary consequence of it, and hence we require separate evidence for personal survival. We must have the proof of personal identity, and this requires the communication of earthly memories under conditions that exclude normal knowledge of them by the person through whom they come. The facts must be numerous enough to evade explanation by all normal means, such as guessing, chance coincidence, fraud, and other possible theories, and they must show that organic unity which would make their meaning unmistakable if the same facts were told us over a telegraph wire.

Now this is not the place to give scientific evidence for such a conclusion. The space at our command here would not suffice to present scientific credentials that would remove an obstinate scepticism. We can only refer readers to the records of the various Societies for Psychical Research and scientific data, published and otherwise, for adequate evidence of survival. Its richness and complexity cannot be presented here in the form of evidence. All that we can do is to pass judgment on the evidence and let the case stand with that. But the kind of facts which it is necessary to have is such as would prove a man's identity in the civil courts. He must communicate little in-



cidents in his past life—and the more trivial the better, provided they are wholly exceptional—that will make it unmistakable as to who is meant by them. They must show that selective unity which a mind would give them in its natural recollections, and exhibit the play of interest and association which would make a spiritualistic theory the most probable as an explanation.

The question here is not whether spiritualism is true or not, but whether personal consciousness survives. There is no objection to calling this view spiritualism, except that many people associate the term with the form of the phenomena rather than with their scientific meaning. Some day the term will come again into respectable usage, but only when it has emancipated itself from the offensive associations which it has now before the public. In the meantime, scientific men have adopted the term spiritism to evade those misunderstandings. The real meaning of the term spiritualism, after the time of Swedenborg, was communication with the dead, in whatever form, though its mediæval import was simply that man had a soul as against the materialistic theory that he had not. But in America the term, while it implied communication with the dead, became complicated with the form of the communication,

especially in physical phenomena, and also immoral ideas and practices, until the scientific world had to signify its position by adopting the term spiritism for the phenomena that suggest the survival of personality. It has some things in common with the term spiritualism, but it aims especially at denoting severer critical methods than have prevailed among those who have called themselves spiritualists, as well as at excluding the religious and non-ethical associations of the latter term. But it is not absolutely necessary to use either term, though it is convenient to have a short word to denote the point of view, and for this purpose spiritism is the one chosen here. It will stand for the bare fact of communication with the dead, and the exclusion of the associations which have made the other term a byword. It will denote the method and evidence that opposes the materialism which denies that a soul exists and that personal consciousness can survive death.

I shall content myself here with simply affirming that I regard the evidence for the survival of personal consciousness as satisfactory for all intelligent people. I cannot produce, and shall not endeavour to produce, it here. It must be found in the records and books discussing the subject. I can only say that, to me, it is conclusive. Were

I at all interested with the absurd theories of telepathy about which some people talk so glibly, I might feel the force of the evidence much less than I do. But as I do not regard telepathy as an explanatory hypothesis at all for anything, and as I contend that there is no evidence whatever for selective telepathy as a fact, I do not give that theory of the phenomena any serious consideration whatever. To me chance coincidence, fraud, and subconscious productions are much stronger rivals of the spiritistic theory than that of telepathy. I do not say that chance coincidence, fraud, or subconscious production actually apply to such facts as I regard as evidence of the supernormal or of spirits, but that all facts which can be explained by these hypotheses have to be excluded from the evidence, and that spiritistic assumptions cannot be admitted until these several theories or objections can be removed. They are limitations of the evidence and cannot apply to the main facts without destroying all standards of truth whatsoever.

In securing and testing this evidence for survival, the stress has been laid upon such complex incidents as easily exclude chance coincidence, guessing, fraud, and fabrication, and other important characteristics have been disregarded, not because they were irrelevant, but because they were



not the primary condition of the evidence. In excluding telepathy from the case, we had to emphasize those facts which were not known by the experimenter as well as the psychic. But as corroborative of this we may regard the psychological features of the phenomena which illustrate the idea of independent personality rather than anything we know of thought-transference. For instance, A, in communicating with B, refers to C in a natural way instead of to D, who is known to B, but is not interested in or known by A in a manner to make a reference to him natural. This sort of thing is very common in the evidence, and it illustrates an important law of the mind, which we should not expect any telepathic process to follow, unless we make it fiendish. But I had, perhaps, best summarize the facts which bear upon the proof of survival, and in doing so I must estimate the weight of real or alleged rival theories.

1. Telepathy is not an explanatory conception, as we have already indicated. It is merely a name for facts.

2. The directness of telepathy as a process has never been scientifically proved, and this must be proved before it can be used even to limit the evidence for spirits.

3. The only telepathy that has any scientific credentials whatever is connected with the present mental states of the agent and

the percipient. There is no evidence whatever that telepathy can read the subconscious mind of any one apart from present mental action on the subject of communication. But no progress whatever can be made in explaining the facts unless telepathy with the subconscious of the agent, and by the subconscious of the percipient, be assumed. This assumption, however, cannot be scientifically made without evidence that such a process is possible by the subconscious.

4. Assuming, however, that telepathy can tap the subconscious of the experimenter or sitter in mediumistic work, even this hypothesis would make no headway with the results in many cases, because the experimenter does not know many of the facts, though it can be proved the deceased person purporting to communicate did know them when living. Hence the only hope of using the term telepathy to cover the facts, assuming that it might explain at all, is to stretch it to include the possibility that the psychic can have access to all living consciousness and subconsciousness, that it can select the right person, and that it can select from his or her subconscious the right facts to impersonate a given deceased person. Short of this assumption, there is no hope of applying a telepathic theory at all. But there is not one iota of evidence for any such selective process.

There is indeed no evidence (a) for the directness of the telepathic process, (b) for the access of the process to the subconscious states apart from present active mental states, and (c) for the selective nature of the process or its extension to all living minds. This ought to be absolutely fatal to the application of telepathy, and especially to the claim to call it scientific.

5. Possibly another conception of telepathy would be to suppose that all living thoughts of all living people are telepathically transmitted to all other individual minds, including that of the psychic, so that the psychic may either subconsciously select the right incidents from his or her own subconscious or from the subconscious of the person present. It is needless to propose such an hypothesis before a scientific court, until we can give adequate evidence for it; and evidence of any kind there is absolutely none for any such view. It is only a modified form of the other infinite telepathy, and whether absurd or not has no standing whatever anywhere, and will receive none until proper evidence is forthcoming.

So much for the negative evidence for the spiritistic theory. This means that we remove thereby the objections to it. We come next to the positive evidence.

6. The psychological unity of the facts sustains the spiritistic view. By this I mean



that the facts chosen to prove identity in any case, such as we have on record, are just the kind of facts which any living person would select to prove his identity, if it were questioned. For instance, X mentions Y and says he is a friend of Z after relating facts in the life of Y. Or the sitter asks about some trouble in the sale of an article; and in the reply the communicator mentions the room in which his mother passed her last days, and the sequel shows that this room was connected with the trouble in the sale, though the sitter had not thought of that fact but only the trouble and the place where it occurred. Thousands of such facts occur, and readers have only to consult the records to find them.

7. The unity of personality and consciousness manifested in the same personalities extending over years of work, while there is no confusion with the work of other personalities in the same time, also makes a rather strong, if not conclusive, argument for the spiritistic theory. I refer to a fact, which I may give by way of illustration. We suppose that A communicates to-day. Before he has a chance to do so again an interval of a month elapses. When he comes again he shows the same characteristics, a memory of the past communication, and connects rightly the new facts with any that have been given in the past, and may extend

this memory over years of work and through different psychics. Such a process cannot be called telepathy without making it infinite; and at the same time we have to admit that it is perfectly helpless in regard to nearly all the facts of human consciousness. Nothing but a spiritistic theory can make any such facts intelligible.

8. There is, again, the difference between communicators. Some communicators are clear and very successful in giving evidence of their identity. Others are very poor. In one case the sitter may have known a given communicator well and abundant facts about his life, but gets little or nothing important from him. Another about whom he knows little or nothing may, on the other hand, be very successful in giving supernormal evidence abundantly. This is absurd on a telepathic theory, and yet it correctly represents what might be very natural on the spiritistic hypothesis.

9. What may be called the dramatic play of personality is another interesting argument. By it I mean that the contents of what purports to come from spirits conform exactly to what we find in the ordinary drama where we find each actor an independent person. The messages and general contents conform to the reality of the whole thing and not to subconscious fabrication. Thus even those personalities who do not

prove their personal identity, sustain their character consistently, carry on their work so as to make it appear that conversation on 'the other side' goes on, and interfere in the process of communication like persons in a drama, not like objects in a spectacular show. Their individuality is complete and rational, rather than like products of the subconscious which interfuse or do not show any multiplicity or interaction with each other at all. It is impossible without elaborate study and illustration to make this argument clear, but it will be clear to students of psychology who give any attention at all to the facts and the problem.

This is no place, however, to examine all the facts which bear upon the issue. I can only mention these few. There are difficulties which have to be considered, and readers will have to be referred to the records for the study of the complications which make the proof of survival overwhelming. I turn to other matters.

It is the triviality of the incidents that excites most opposition, at least among laymen, to the spiritistic theory. The simple reply to any such objection, real or imaginary, is that any man who raises it from this point of view does not understand what the problem is for the scientific man. He would ridicule the layman for bringing it forward. Nothing but trivial facts will



ever prove either supernormal knowledge or personal identity, and these must be shown in order to prove the spiritistic theory. Just let any man sit down and ask himself what he would select to prove his identity to a friend. He would soon find himself thinking of some practical joke, a broken jack-knife and a wart, a cow kicking over a bucket of milk, and other such incidents. He can do nothing else, if he is rational. Triviality is absolutely necessary to prove the case.

But then it is not true that trivial facts are the only ones communicated. We have to lay stress upon them for the reasons just explained. But there is abundant material of a philosophic and an ethical character, sometimes quite as lofty as anything a living intelligent person could give. But it is worthless as evidence for the existence of spirits. No sane scientific man would produce that sort of material as evidence of the supernormal, unless it came through a person who could not normally read or write, or had such inferior intelligence as to make the phenomena miraculous. He has to rest his case upon little trivial incidents which are provably supernormal. When we have made the spiritistic hypothesis acceptable we may then turn back to this other kind of material and discuss it. But at present it can receive no place in the

evidence for the existence of spirits. We are not in a position to verify such statements. It will be a very difficult and laborious task to secure proof for any message purporting to tell us about a transcendental life. The only way such statements can be substantiated is to get the same messages about the other life through a large number of psychics not in collusion and not familiar with the literature or the ideas about the spiritual world. And perhaps we should have to have the statements checked by both the same communicators and different ones through the same and also through different sources, after we had satisfied the criterion of personal identity. Now this is a task not to be undertaken lightly. There are numerous ideas in common that have already come through different psychics, and they are not to be summarily rejected, as some of them have fair credentials for demanding at least serious consideration, even though they do not satisfy scientific requirements. But we have still to organize experiments on a proper scale for a problem of such magnitude.

We cannot accept statements on the ground that they agree with our preconceived ideas of such a world or what we think it ought to be. That only opens the floodgates to the imagination and to all the capricious opinions of people who know nothing about

the criteria of truth. Besides, we could hardly expect a spiritual world to be so like the physical as to be sure that conformity with our ideas would be a criterion; and if it differed greatly we could not verify it by any human testimony until we had eliminated the influence of the subconscious and other influences from the results claiming to represent the spiritual world. We are placed in a dilemma, therefore. If the statements agree with our ideas of the physical world they will be open to scepticism, and will not be unusual enough to excite either interest or evidential probability. If they represent it as wholly different they will not be verifiable. Hence whether they agree or differ with our ideas they cannot be accepted on their own credentials, even when we are sure of the identity of the communicator. If we knew anything about the conditions under which communications are made, and if we were assured that messages were not fragmentary and incomplete, we might attach some value to accredited witnesses from the other side, and there is no doubt that much of the testimony that comes from such sources deserves serious consideration. But we are far from any results that can be regarded as scientific proof of what the spiritual world is and what its activities are. Although this is the chief matter of interest to the general public, it is



not to be decided in the way that public expects. When it is willing to put the scientific man in a position to investigate it rightly, it may, in time, expect some sort of verdict, but until it does this we shall remain ignorant.

The problem of personal identity can be decided with comparative ease. I mean, of course, compared with the problem of what the spiritual world is. If we have made little headway in convincing the world that personal identity and personal survival have been proved, it must be apparent that we are less well off in the matter of what the transcendental world is like. The difficulty in both, however, is much more in the prejudices either that prevent seeing and understanding the facts or that sustain the will not to examine them. It is a significant fact that every intelligent man who has devoted sufficient time and experiment to this subject, has come out on the side of spirits, even though he has no knowledge of what the process is by which their communications are effected. Scepticism may be justified in questioning elaborate systems from a spiritistic source, and indeed it is this, perhaps, that sustains the resistance to the belief in spirits at all. But if it would discriminate between problems it might justify its policy without being ridiculous in its destructive theories.

## CHAPTER VII

### METHODS AND DIFFICULTIES OF COMMUNICATION

THE method of communication by the dead with the living gives no superficial evidence of what it is or of the way it is done. All that we observe is a living human being, either in a normal condition talking or writing, or in a trance talking or writing, and it is the contents of what is written or said that determine whether we have evidence of supernormal information that, when it is of a certain character, is explainable by the action of spirits. But what the process is by which they communicate or produce the effects which we observe we do not know directly. We have to infer it from various facts observed in connection with the phenomena and the statements made by the alleged communicators. The latter we have to verify by the comparison of the facts and of statements made through various sources which are not in collusion with each other and have no common beliefs which might make the agreement in ideas natural.

The most prevalent phenomena in this connection are those in which psychics describe what they apparently see or hear. If they describe what they see, we call them clairvoyants. If they describe what they hear, we call them clairaudients. In one we have real or apparent visions, in the other real or apparent voices. They are probably not 'real' in any sense but the mental or subjective one, and are exposed to the suspicion that they are hallucinations of some kind. The time was when the sceptic referred to these apparent visions as evidence of fraud, merely simulating the perception of things. But later and thorough investigation, especially of apparitions and telepathic phantasms, gives reason to believe that clairvoyant visions, however we explain them, are not what the sceptic supposed; and indeed we may come to look at their occurrence as more or less evidence of some sort of genuineness, even though we do not resort to the supernatural to find an explanation. There have been too many private cases reporting such experiences, and too many test incidents with psychics of all kinds, any longer to question the veridical nature of such phenomena. By 'veridical nature' I mean that the visions or voices, if such they may be called, convey information that is not normal, and that the phenomena themselves



have all the superficial characteristics of reality to the sense in which they appear to occur. They are not the ordinary subjective hallucinations, which would mean simply that some abnormal conditions exist in the body of the subject having them, and that they do not point to an external reality or supernormal source to explain them. It is otherwise with these clairvoyant and clairaudient phenomena. They point to an external stimulus and to one that implies supernormal information. They take the form of apparent reality, usually of the dead, or suggest this source very clearly. We may call them hallucinations, as they probably are, but to qualify them as veridical is to indicate that they do not have the same kind of explanation as subjective hallucinations. What we know of telepathic hallucinations, whatever explanation we give of them, suggests that we might call these phenomena telepathic phantasms or hallucinations induced in the living by the dead, when they illustrate the personal identity of the dead, and by the living if we have no reason to suppose the agency of the dead in incidents that are not evidential of their intervention. But in spiritistic experiments with psychics the phenomena superficially, in general at least, represent the dead in some way, and we may imagine that their thoughts in some way induce

veridical hallucinations in the living. The telepathic hypothesis cannot dispute the possibility of this, because it has to assume this induction in its own theory; and if it has no ability to select facts from the living to impersonate the dead, we are justified in using its process to make clairvoyant and clairaudient phenomena intelligible in terms of spiritistic agencies. These pictures and voices, when they are evidence of supernatural information and illustrative of the personal identity of the deceased, may thus well be regarded as phantasms, but with a spiritistic cause, even though we do not yet know the process by which they are produced.

In many of my experiments I find that this process has been a prevalent one. The psychic or the so-called 'control' seems to be a spectator of apparent realities and describes what he or she sees or hears. The communications do not seem to be direct transmission on the part of the person whose identity is concerned. The psychic or control seems to be looking at a real world of some kind, quite simulative of the material world we know in sense perception. We should not suspect that it is purely mental. It has the appearance of just what we find with living beings, and it is precisely that feature of the facts which excites distrust. That a spiritual world should be exactly

like the material one is directly against many of the philosophic and other presuppositions which we have assumed for many centuries. But nevertheless phenomena which are undoubtedly supernormal reflect these characteristics. They represent pictures which duplicate, at least superficially, the real world and present all the perplexities which such a representation implies.

Now it happened that I got a clue to its meaning in the following facts, which were connected with the second method of communicating. This other method was what may be called the direct method as distinct from that of mental pictures or phantasms. In automatic writing where the communicator does his own work, there is little or no apparent evidence of mental pictures. Things are not described from the point of view of a spectator. They are told in the first person. The communicator seems to write out his own thoughts and memories. We seem to be dealing with the body of a living person and the mind of a deceased one. This method we call that of 'possession,' whatever that means. This seems to be the usual method in automatic writing, and always so where the communicator does not send his messages through an intermediary called the 'control.'

Now it was in connection with the breakdown of this direct method in the case of a



certain celebrated person who had recently passed away, that I discovered the nature of the indirect method, which is that of mental pictures. This communicator had more or less failed to come up to expectations, and, as he and I, during his life, had talked over the hypothesis by which Dr. Hodgson and myself, when the latter was living, had attempted to explain the confusion of the messages, this more recent communicator referred to it and indicated rather clearly that it did not apply to his condition in the work he was doing. In the course of the communication he explained very obscurely that 'fugitive phantasms' were a factor in the process. I did not understand what this meant. Dr. Hodgson took it up later and tried to make things clearer, but I did not catch his meaning in anything, except in one sentence, until another person made the matter clear, and this last person was the one who had suggested the theory of Dr. Hodgson and myself through another psychic. The main point of this was that the thoughts of the communicator became visible or audible to the control, and this, taken in connection with the statement of Dr. Hodgson that they could not inhibit or prevent the transmission of their thoughts to us, threw a flood of light upon the whole problem. But it did so in connection with the abandonment of the direct

method of communicating for the indirect method. Finding that the communicator could not get his evidence clear himself when trying to transmit it directly, the controls adopted the policy of trying a double intermediary in which one of them received the thoughts of the communicator and transferred them to the other control, who described them as scenes before his vision, or words now and then that came to the ear, so to speak. The communicator simply thought, and his thoughts were transmitted in pictures to the controls, and then described as realities.

Now, as the communicator could not inhibit the transmission of his thoughts the whole panorama of them passed to the control, central and marginal thoughts alike, the main thoughts he intended and the associated thoughts, the 'fugitive phantasms,' as they had been called, and the control had to select discriminatingly what he or she thought were intended to prove identity. But the main point of this is the fact that the messages appeared to both controls in the form of pictures, phantasms, hallucinations, visions, or voices. The description of them was that of a reality of which the control was a spectator. The real world was a world of thought, but it was apparently a material one as superficially represented in the communications. It was the

memories of the dead precipitated as apparitions, so to speak, and not the reality seen or heard as it appeared to be.

The difficulties of communicating by either of these methods, the direct or indirect, will more or less suggest themselves. Take the indirect method first. The communicator may be perfectly clear in his thoughts and memories, but if the whole mass of his mental states is transmitted to the control or to the psychic, the selection of the right incidents will depend on the judgment and intelligence, or the abilities of the control, or the subconsciousness of the psychic's mind. Suppose that the communicator wants to mention a visit to the Falls of Minnehaha as a good incident to identify himself to a certain person. He thinks of the name and the falls. But names are hard to get through, and the psychic or control gets only a visual picture of a waterfall; this might wholly fail to effect the object of the communicator. The picture of a mere waterfall would mean nothing. Suppose, however, that with this picture of the waterfall comes the element in it of a peculiarly crooked tree hanging over the cliff, and it attracts the attention of the psychic's subconsciousness, and she dwells on this feature of the picture, and says nothing about the fall. The living person for whom the incident is intended,



may never have known anything about this peculiar crooked tree, though it is an excellent feature for identifying the fall. The whole incident falls to the ground because the psychic does not get the name or because the general picture of a fall does not identify those of Minnehaha. Suppose, further, that association calls up an event closely connected in the mind of the communicator with the visit to Minnehaha, but not known to the living person, and not verifiable by him; again the result is a failure though the fact may be true but not provable. The falls are barely noticed as a passing phantasm, while the other incidents, not recognizable, are described minutely and in detail as having struck the attention of the control or the subconscious of the psychic. In this way mistakes and confusion may arise. There is no limit to the distortions in such a process of the messages transmitted. Every fact has to run the gauntlet of more or less uncontrolled association on the part of the communicator, the capricious emphasis which his own mind may put on some incidents and the marginal associates in the panorama of his mind, the judgment of the control in the selection of the part of the panorama which he or she chooses as the intended message, and the similar process which may go on in the subconscious of the psychic after all the other

distortions have done their work. Small wonder that mistake and confusion occur.

In this process messages will inevitably become fragmentary. Confusion cannot be avoided. The rapid movement of ideas in the mind of the communicator will bring pictures to the mind of the control, or of the psychic often out of relation to the person in the mind of control or psychic; and hence, while incidents may be true, as experiences of the communicator, they may be wrongly related and pass for error. Then, if another communicator be present, and an interest be aroused in his mind sufficient to produce an intense image or thought, this may get through in the personality of the regular communicator, and be pronounced as false simply because the sitter does not know how the mistake occurred, or that the message came from another than the alleged person. In this *mêlée* of rapidly passing thoughts, with central and marginal ideas occupying various degrees of interest for the control or psychic which they may not have for the communicator, there is sure to be confusion and error. The fact, too, that the control or psychic cannot hold in mind the whole panorama long enough to tell all its details, but must abbreviate the whole, as we should the contents of a lecture to which we have listened, shows very clearly the source of fragmentary messages

and the association of incidents which seem to us wholly disconnected, but which would be clear did we receive the whole story.

The direct method of communication is accompanied with other kinds of difficulties. This method has the appearance of being like our own control of our muscular system. We suppose that the spirit tries to work with the muscular mechanism of the psychic, precisely in the same way that he had acted on his own organism when living. Now we know that a person exceedingly ill or injured by an accident may lose more or less of the control of his muscles temporarily, so that he has to recover normal conditions in order to have normal and easy control of the muscular action. Indeed, this control is only gradually attained by the infant. At first its movements are spasmodic and unregulated. It cannot direct its movements to any specific end, but simply throws about hands and feet in impulsive and irrational ways. But gradually it acquires power of will over the muscles until they respond systematically to desire, and even become automatic, so that the will can go on with other duties. But death separates soul and body, and a discarnate soul has to learn all over again to control a living organism. The difficulty, no doubt, is greater from the fact that it is not his own organism, and also the fact that the soul



of its possessor is not eliminated. With the presence of this living soul and organic habits wholly different from that of the discarnate spirit, there will be obstacles to communication which ought to seem quite natural to anyone who reflects. The attainment of control will have to be a matter of development, and in the meantime many a message which has passed through the mind of the communicator does not get expression. The communicator may even not know that it has not got through. He may think that the message has got through when it has not done so. Words and fragments may get through, but not enough to make the incidents either evidential or intelligible. The confusion and error here are due, not so much to perplexities of the control or psychic, as to the obstacles in the organism of the psychic which prevent even clear thoughts in the communicator from obtaining expression. There may also be disturbance in the mind of the communicator, and this will only increase the confusion made sure by inadaptation to the physical organism with which the spirit has to work.

One of the most important difficulties in connection with this method of communicating is what I have called the 'associates of constrained attention.' The discarnate spirit has to concentrate his attention on

control of the machinery of communication. He has to learn control of it just as a child has to learn to write or speak. The intense occupation of the mind on this work will use the energy for the purely mechanical part of the communication, and leave little for the mind to do in recalling specific facts. The attention has to be relaxed from the act of control in order to recall incidents, and that relaxation stops the sending of messages, while the attention on the act of control may prevent messages from being controlled. The communicator seems to be between the devil and the deep sea. When recalling incidents he cannot control, and when controlling he cannot recall. The constrained attention in the struggle to control the motor system prevents giving attention to special incidents or voluntary recall, while the diversion of attention to this act relaxes control of the muscles. Hence the only hope of easy and successful communication by this method would be sufficient practice to make control automatic instead of voluntary, so that the mind could give its voluntary attention to the incidents to be purposely communicated. The same thing would take place with the living if they had no automatic control of the organism. In conversation, we constantly inhibit or prevent expression of certain things that are in our mind, but this

is because we can let the automatic mechanism do its own work, while we use the will to select what shall be automatically expressed and exclude what we do not wish to say. If we had to concentrate attention on the act of speaking or writing, we should probably find that we could recall little to talk or write about, or could express only the most general things that came automatically and without effort. This is the situation with a discarnate spirit. The constrained attention affects the associations, and the relaxation of it prevents the associations or recalled incidents from getting through. There is no remedy for this except the one in actual life, namely, practice and the acquisition of the same kind of automatic control that we have when living.

Dr. Hodgson held the theory that communicators, while communicating, were in something like a trance or dream state, and in this way he explained the confusion of the messages, their fragmentary nature, and perhaps their disjointed connections. I defended this view of the phenomena for some years; but the mental picture method of communicating, with the obstacles to selection from the panorama of thoughts transmitted to the control or psychic, modified the evidence for this supposed dream state, and it had either to be aban-



done or modified in such a way as to lose much of its probability and force. It is clear to me now that 'trance or dream state' does not properly describe it, but I still think there are difficulties in the communicator that have not yet been made perfectly clear. The 'associates of constrained attention' will simulate a trance or dream state more or less in their effects, and to that extent render Dr. Hodgson's and my older view less necessary. But there is still something to be accounted for that resembles some abnormal mental conditions of the communicator in certain emergencies. They may be due to the effect of contact with a physical organism which is not normal to the spirit, and they may be influenced also by the necessity of inhibiting the subconscious states of the psychic and the mental states of the sitter, so that wandering thoughts may come now and then in the struggle to control. But this is no place to go into that problem. I can only mention it as indicating that all the perplexities of the subject at this point have not been resolved.

The difficulties with proper names are a most interesting subject, but we cannot undertake to explain them. Suffice it to say that they seem partly phonetic, and find their analogy in similar difficulties with the telephone. But there is more than phonetic

analogy in this problem, and we cannot take it up in this limited space.

The important point is to see that the very nature of the process of communicating, both the direct and the indirect method, that of control and that of mental pictures, explains many perplexities, and we may leave the solution of other difficulties to more detailed works on the subject. It suffices here to make a step toward resolving some of them, and these the main difficulties.

## CHAPTER VIII

### APPARITIONS AND PREMONITIONS

IT might seem that the subject of apparitions should have been treated earlier. The English Society for Psychological Research took them up before dealing with spiritistic phenomena at all, and published its *Phantasms of the Living* and the *Census of Hallucinations* with a view to explaining apparitions by the hypothesis of telepathy. They recognized three types of them, apparitions of the living, apparitions of the dying, and apparitions of the dead, but no one except Mr. Myers and Mr. Gurney said anything about the last class. The object was to postpone the consideration of the spiritistic theory. The resource of telepathy was to explain the first two classes where the facts were certainly not evidence of discarnate existence or intervention, while the last class seemed too small and too poorly accredited apparently to assure any interpretation for the supernormal. But I have had special reasons for postponing the consideration of apparitions until the spiritistic



theory had been discussed. The phenomena which at least suggest and support a spiritistic hypothesis, exclude telepathy from consideration, as we have seen, and for this reason alone we are justified in suspending judgment on so hasty an explanation of apparitions, until we find some clue out of the labyrinth of other phenomena that certainly do not present any superficial evidence of being exactly like apparitions, though study shows connections.

But there are two special reasons for thus suspending the consideration of apparitions until we have a reasonable theory for the other facts. The first is that all three types of apparitions must ultimately have the same general explanation. It will be absurd to explain those of the living and dying by telepathy and to exclude those of the dead from the same explanation. There is no essential difference between the three types. Their internal characteristics are the same. They are all of them so often connected with crises of some kind in the living that they point to a unity which must be taken into account in the effort to explain them. If apparitions of the living and the dying are to be explained by telepathy, it is because the agent is the living or dying person, and so you would have to explain those of the dead either by supposing the dead to be the agent, which makes them evidence

of spirits, or you would have to suppose that some living *third* person was the agent. But this latter supposition deprives the telepathic hypothesis in the case of the living and dying of its assumption that the agent is necessarily the person identified in the coincidence. Hence if you are going to introduce a *tertium quid*, some other than the living, dying, or dead person, into the problem, you have to seek an explanation of the same kind for all three types of the phenomena, and that will be outside of telepathy, or outside of any form of it that is capable of proof.

The second reason for waiting to explain apparitions is the fact that the 'mental picture' method of communication in spiritistic phenomena throws so much light upon the problem that, instead of offering an explanation of apparitions prior to that of mediumistic phenomena, we may subordinate the former to theories of the latter. I turn, then, to the implications of this 'mental picture' method of communicating, after stating what the real problem is.

The great perplexity for the scientific man in the phenomena of apparitions was 'spirit clothes.' It seems preposterous that, even on the hypothesis that the apparition correctly represented a reality, *quasi* material, it should have exactly the same clothes that the human being wore when

living ! That is so inconceivable and so absurd that it favours scepticism and any explanation whatever rather than its acceptance as reality. It seemed possible to believe in their being pure hallucinations in spite of the real or apparent evidence that they were not casual. A duplication of the earthly life, where we had supposed the spiritual to be wholly different from it, only challenged doubt and made belief more difficult. The situation destroyed all the possibility of supposing them beyond chance or as significant of something supernormal. We were ready to believe anything of them rather than that they were spirits.

But the 'mental picture' method of communicating makes the explanation quite easy, easy of course after we have reason to believe it a fact and understand something of the process. I have shown in the previous chapter that the communicator's thoughts were transmitted in the form of hallucinations or phantasms to the control or to the psychic, and then these pictures, visions, or apparitions, were described as if they were realities. They were usually memories of the communicator and of objects which no longer had a material existence. What appeared as a reality to the control or to the psychic was only a thought of the communicator. How such a thing takes place is not the question here, but



only the fact that it does, and that apparitions can be classified with the same process. A few illustrations will make this clear.

In a communication purporting to come from my father, he had mentioned his gun, and I took occasion to ask what he shot with it. The answer, 'Hogs, beeves, and rabbits,' would have been correct. But the psychic evidently guessed foxes, wolves, hawks, and eagles, none of which, except hawks, existed in my home locality, and hence the facts were false. I did not correct the mistake which occurred in the automatic writing. The next day, as the psychic went into the trance and during the subliminal stage of it, in which she is a spectator of apparitions, not an impersonator, she described the details of a butchering scene in my early days, and asked if this was not what the gun was used for, thus spontaneously correcting the error of the day before and answering my question. But the most interesting feature of this description was the psychic's repulsion to the scene itself, saying that she did not like to see things like that in heaven. But in a moment the vision vanished, and she exclaimed: 'Oh, now it is lovely.' The subconscious of the psychic, in the same condition as our sleep and dreaming, had taken the vision as a reality, just as we do our hallucinations and dream images. The scene, in fact, was only a memory of my

father's, not a reality, *quasi* material or otherwise. It was a telepathic hallucination produced by the dead.

Again, my father described the three churns of my early days quite accurately, and with them the dog that had done the churning at one time. Of the dog, the psychic said he 'is here,' meaning that he was present. Now she believes that animals survive; and this discrimination between the dog and the churns was probably due to the reflection of that conviction through her own subconsciousness; for there is not more reason to believe that the dog was actually present, in spirit, than the churns. Memory pictures transmitted by telepathy is the better explanation of all of them.

A more significant incident is the following: I had asked my father, purporting to communicate, about some trouble in the sale of some wool, as he had previously referred to a certain unruly ram in his flock of sheep. After saying something about this trouble, though not clearly enough to make the incident evidential, he suddenly turned to the subject of his mother and the room where she had spent her last days. This, its furniture, its fireplace, and a number of other things of an evidential nature were described, and in it my grandmother appeared as a little old, very wrinkled woman with a cap on her head. This described her

exactly in her last days. She was so wrinkled and so thin from the loss of flesh when she died, that she was nothing but skin and bones at the end. But in the midst of all this the statement was made: 'She is standing by laughing.' Here was a complete picture of her, the room, and her last days.

Now, if I or the subconscious of the psychic had not known or represented my father as communicating the facts, I should have had superficial evidence that my grandmother was communicating and that she appeared here just as she died, cap and all. But, on the one hand, it is my father communicating, and, on the other, my grandmother is represented as standing by laughing, and is apparently distinguished from the apparition of her as a wrinkled old woman. This wrinkled appearance was a distinguishing mark of her to my father and other members of the family, and so represents a memory of my father, not necessarily a spiritual reality of any other kind. The fact that my father is proving his identity with incidents that his mother did not know, that he is referring to the room in connection with the trouble about the wool, because it was in that particular room before my grandmother ever came to it, that the accident happened to the wool that caused the trouble, shows that I am dealing with a transferred 'mental picture,' not a *quasi*



material or other reality. The phenomena of the subliminal stage in the psychic supply ample corroborative evidence of the same nature.

Now the great significance of this phenomenon is the fact that the apparition was not produced by my grandmother. It was the thought of my father. Quite constantly this psychic, in the subliminal stage of her trance, sees an apparition or hears a voice, but cannot tell anything more about it. She does not know from whom the voice issues or what produces the apparition. No name may come with it. But in such a case as that of my father just narrated, we have a clear indication of the source, and that makes the apparition the product of his thought, where we should have had no indication of this but for our knowledge that he it was who was communicating the facts. The apparition might superficially suggest its own origin, and in that case we should have the perplexity of 'spirit clothes' or the continuance of the conditions that prevailed in an earthly life, while the explanation of the facts as due to telepathic hallucinations from the dead removes these perplexities completely. It is not the spirit itself that produces the result, but some one else. It is a memory of a third person, not the reality of the person represented, that is at the basis of the phenomena.

This explanation unifies mediumistic phenomena and apparitions. That is, it classifies them together in a casual explanation. They no longer require separate hypotheses for their explanation. The 'mental picture' method of communicating involves the production of apparitions and explains them as mental products, not realities as represented, and this introduces a *tertium quid* into the phenomena of apparitions, a third party besides the personality represented and the percipient of them. The agent becomes, not the person appearing, but some one else who may not appear at all, and who may remain as fully in the background as does a control often in mediumistic phenomena, where this control is absolutely essential for the result but does not superficially appear as the cause. Indeed, this fact still more closely identifies the process with that of apparitions. If all mediumistic phenomena require the agency of the control, even when this control is not superficially or avowedly present, we see a perfectly distinct resemblance to the production of apparitions by some one else than the person appearing in the vision, and we have a law of communication with the dead that may cover a vast field and reduce to a simple order what seems to be a complex and chaotic system. It means that a *tertium quid* is at the basis on the whole set of

phenomena, and that we must reckon with it in apparitions as well as ordinary communications. It may even extend to other types of psychic phenomena, but this is not the place to take them up. We are satisfied if the perplexities of apparitions can be resolved by it.

This general law takes telepathy between the living out of the case, except by supposing a form of it which is not proved, which probably could not be proved, and perhaps, if it were proved, would show it to be most extraordinarily devilish. The telepathic hypothesis depends on supposing that the agent or cause of the apparition is the person who appears to the percipient. This was the view taken by the authors of *Phantasms of the Living*. The living or dying person whose apparition was seen was supposed to be the agent, the person whose thought caused the phantasm or apparition. But if we have to suppose, with the process of communication between the dead and the living, that it is a third party who is the cause, and that third party not always or often discoverable, we have to exclude any such telepathy as we have been supposing and for which there is at least a modicum of evidence, and have to resort to that form of it which is without any scientific evidence whatever for its existence. It is apparent, therefore, that if we assume a *tertium quid* in all three



types of apparitions mentioned above, we can quite easily understand that one general cause for them can be supposed, and they get a perfect unity which they do not have on the telepathic hypothesis usually presented. The apparitions of the dead as well as those of the living would thus have a definite law behind them, and that, too, the same law in both cases, the person appearing not being the real agent, or at least more than a co-operative cause in the result.

I know of one case of apparition that illustrates this claim clearly. A lady had employed a seamstress to help her with some work. She did not know that the seamstress was psychic. When they sat down to work the seamstress began to cough rather violently. The lady got her a glass of water, but it was refused, because the seamstress felt it would pass in a moment, which it did. She then saw an apparition which she described as a man, heavy set, with long white beard, white hair, and holding his hand on the lady's shoulder. The lady recognized in the description her father-in-law, who used to hold his hand on her shoulder in this way. But the interesting circumstance is that her father died from a violent fit of coughing. Now this transmission to a psychic of some peculiar physical act or characteristic that marked the dying moments of a person is a very frequent phenomenon,

and it occurs in the act of controlling, as in this case. I meet it often in mediumistic experiments. Now, if the seamstress had not coughed we should not have suspected what the real cause of the apparition was. But as it is evident that the lady's father was the control, as indicated by the coughing, we have a most important incident in the cause of the apparition of the father-in-law. It is apparently not the father-in-law himself that caused it. The effect is not an immediate one. It is an intermediate effect, just as in all mediumistic phenomena even when the control is apparently not present or active. The father caused the apparition, whatever part the father-in-law had in it. It would have appeared otherwise superficially, but for the evidence of who was influencing the psychic.

Another instance occurred in a case of pure telepathy which I have on record. A man carried on a series of successful experiments in telepathy. He did not report to me anything but the facts which proved the transmission of his thoughts. On my interrogating him about other experiences, it turned out that he frequently had an apparition of a lady whose messages to him served as warnings, and if he did not obey them he suffered for it; but while he had no apparition of this person when he was experimenting with telepathy, he was con-

scious of outside assistance in the experiments, a feeling that should not exist if the process were direct or not intermediated.

I cannot give these last two incidents as evidence of the phenomena claimed, but only as illustrations of a general fact, at least hinted at in many instances. They happen to be more complete in their details than we usually find such phenomena, and for that reason are crucial examples of a process, the main feature of which is better attested in other instances.

What this explanation of apparitions brings out is that the process of producing them is a mental one. We do not require to suppose that the analogies of perception are at the basis of them. We do not see the real spirit. We see a mental effect of spiritual action on the living mind. The phenomena are not material, but mental. We do not see ghosts as is usually supposed, but have phantasms produced by the thoughts which the dead transmit to us in the form of hallucinations. These phantasms are as good evidence of identity as any *quasi* material reality, and though they do not make clear what manner of life a spiritual world represents, the recognition of their nature removes the main perplexities from their occurrence. I shall not insist that all apparitions are caused in this way. It may be that the reality is seen in some cases.



But we have no definite criterion for distinguishing, as yet, between those which are caused by another than the person appearing, and those which might be caused directly by the person appearing. In either case, however, they may be mental products, though veridical and evidence of survival. It is certain, however, if we assume a spiritistic theory at all, that many of them are telepathic phantasms produced by the dead and by others than the person seen. The agent is not the superficially apparent one, but a *tertium quid* or third person, manifesting a law far wider than a supposed direct telepathy between the living, though the telepathic process be involved. It then becomes possible that even telepathy between the living is mediated by the discarnate, and as the claim is often made in mediumistic phenomena that this is the fact, it remains only to obtain the evidence for this claim.

The primary interest in premonitions and predictions is that they cannot possibly be explained by any conceivable form of telepathy, and yet they are constantly connected with both apparitions and mediumistic communications. This clearly indicates that we require a comprehensive explanation for the whole group of psychic phenomena. There are, of course, several types of premonitions and predictions into which

we cannot go into in detail. I can only suggest a few analogies which connect some of them, perhaps all of them, with spiritistic explanations.

There are frequent premonitions of coming death. These often occur in connection with mediumistic experiments where spirits are concerned both ostensibly and evidentially. Now as living people can predict death where they have sufficient knowledge of the conditions that must so terminate, it is quite easy to conceive that discarnate spirits, where they could detect indications of coming death not visible to the living, and if they could get an opportunity to communicate with the living, might convey or foretell the fact either by apparitions or mediumistic communications. It might be the same with other events within certain limitations. Also assuming, as automatic writing indicates, that spirits might affect human actions to a limited extent, we might find instances in which they bring about their own predictions. But we cannot treat seriously any instances in which the subject knows the prediction, as he may consciously or unconsciously fulfil it himself. The evidence for their occurrence and the frequency of their occurrence, however, are not so great as in other phenomena. But assuming that they do occur beyond chance coincidence, guessing, and self-fulfilment, we

can understand how spirits might either foresee some events or actually bring about others that they have predicted.

There are types of premonitions or predictions, however, which are not so easily explained. They seem to indicate events which it would seem impossible either to foresee or bring about. It is a common idea in some cases that events may take place in the ethereal or spiritual world before they are realized in the physical world. Now if the ethereal is a mental world, this would indicate that it is possible that certain thoughts and purposes might often be formed there long before they are realized in matter, and certain qualified persons might be able to estimate the probabilities of their fulfilment. In fact, there is a distinct analogy to this in our own mental life. We form our plans long before they obtain execution, and we do not always realize them as soon as we expect. A thing has actually taken place in our minds when we plan it in so far as mental reality is concerned, but it often takes time to give it material expression and reality. It may be the same with cosmic evolution, so that qualified spirits might ascertain the probabilities in favourable situations and base predictions upon them. This, however, is not a proved fact.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE NATURE OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

THE explanation of apparitions and the suggestion made in the last paragraph of the explanation of predictions, offer a clue to what is possible in the nature of a future life. We cannot read the literature on this subject, however, without feeling perplexed by its real or apparent contradictions. No two psychics give exactly the same account of such a world. Each colours the communications about it by his own ideas more or less, and in some instances they simply duplicate their own ideas, and there is no evidence that their alleged communications about it are correct. But in all of the literature there often runs a thread of common ideas which suggest that we are not dealing altogether with subconscious products and imagination. There is just enough consistency amidst many contradictions to keep the scientific student alert to some possibilities.

I cannot go into illustrations here at length. They would only necessitate un-

favourable criticisms. One has only to read such works as Andrew Jackson Davis produced to raise the severest sceptical doubts. No one could have given a more graphic account of the other life than he does in his *Summerland*. But if we compare it with the communications of Judge Edmunds, the differences are so great as to create doubt, rather than prove the case. Then Stainton Moses, in his *Spirit Teachings*, gives an altogether different account, and through Mrs. Piper the same real or alleged personalities denied some of the most important statements made by them through Stainton Moses. In all of them, however, it is represented as a replica or duplicate of the material world. And yet, in the face of this, communicators will often tell us that they cannot tell us what it is like, and that we would not understand it if they did.

Of course, all this raises the fundamental question, whether we are communicating with spirits at all in such phenomena, and whether some subconscious dreaming might not be sufficient to account for the whole set of statements made about such a world. This is the easiest explanation of the facts, and but for evidence of supernormal information, showing that spirits exist, we might dismiss the whole subject with indifference. But it is not at all likely that all non-evidential matter should be subconscious

fabrication when so much of it cannot possibly be this. It is extremely probable that much non-evidential matter is spiritistic in its source, and that it is not much more coloured by the subconscious of the medium through whom it comes, than is the evidence of the supernormal, which is often—I think always—more or less so coloured. The only question is whether either the evidential or the non-evidential matter can be interpreted superficially as indicative of what a spiritual world really is.

The first difficulty in the way of determining what a spiritual world is or is like, is the fact that we cannot verify any information on the matter in the way we verify evidential communications. The facts which prove the existence of a spiritual world, do not necessarily carry with them any information regarding its nature. They have to be facts which the psychic does not know, and which living people verify as memories or experiences in the earthly life of the communicator. This makes the case rest on the testimony of the living. The statements of the dead count for nothing. They cannot be received on trust. They have to receive verification from the living, as having been events in the life of the deceased and not previously known by the psychic. But such verification cannot be sought or obtained from the living regarding



messages that purport to describe a spiritual life. There is, however, a way in which they can be verified. But it is a costly and difficult process. We should have to make experiments with a large number of psychics whose history and education we knew well, excluding previous knowledge and interest in the things said about a life beyond the grave. We should also need to have the same communicators through this large number of psychics, and the same messages from them. In this way we might eliminate, to some extent at least, the influence of the subconscious in the psychics which gives the colouring of their own ideas to the messages. We should never wholly exclude that colouring tendency; but we could do something to determine the extent to which the personal equation in the psychic affected the results. Common statements made through sources which knew nothing about what spiritualism has held regarding such a world, would have their value, and if obtained often enough might have the value of verification. But the task of getting such information is not a light one. It will require immense resources and a long period of time, together with infinite patience in dealing with the material obtained.

Then the question may be whether the conditions for communicating with the in-

carnate, with the material world, are such as to render it probable that the information will properly represent a spiritual world. Suppose that the discarnate have to be in some trance or abnormal state when communicating, and necessarily think in terms of their sensory experience when living in the body, we might have clear enough statements from them, but could not regard them as correctly describing a supersensible world. But I am not inclined to think that this objection is a formidable one. Besides, we have still to prove either that there is such a condition for communicating, or that, if some similar condition prevails it is correctly conceived in the terms used. Moreover, we have found that it may even be doubtful if such a limitation to communication exists. But suppose it does not, it is possible that the conditions of getting messages through may involve the conditions that make sensory representation necessary, and the recurrence to earthly modes of thought and speech; and in that case we could not interpret the messages superficially as properly indicative of a spiritual world. That is to say, mere appearances in the form of the statements would not be a true index of what the spiritual world actually is. If the conditions for communicating necessitate more or less reproduction of past memories, or

the conversion of new experiences into that mould, we should not get a true conception of a spiritual life from the result. Of course, we do not know whether any such conditions prevail or not, and hence this point is only a speculative one. The fact that the spiritual world is not open to sense perception is a presumption that it is not a sensible, but a supersensible, world; and what a supersensible world would be we do not know, except that it is the negative of our sense experiences; though we might have to admit, if evidence proved it, that it was a replica of the material world, just as the ultra-violet rays of the spectrum are, though not visible. The law of continuity in nature, and the unity of things, would suggest that the other world is only in degree different from what we call matter, and that it is sense experience which makes us define the material world as we do, forgetting that the atomic theory, and all the metaphysics of ether and the ions and electrons, make matter in its bases quite as supersensible as the theologian ever made spirit. Even in science sense perception is not the measure of reality, and it conceives the supersensible as the basis of things in sense, even though it does not make that supersensible spirit. But when we once admit that the idea of matter is reconcilable with that of the supersensible, it is a



mere matter of words as to whether we might not make spirit so nearly allied to it, as to connect directly a spiritual world with it, and find a basis for the explanation of all the supernormal phenomena which seem to duplicate the material in all but its appeal to sense perception.

But the religious mind has not used the term 'spiritual' in any such sense. It has identified it with the immaterial, though I myself might even accept that term as adaptable to the flexible conception of matter as conceived by science. But nevertheless the religious mind has meant something very different by the spiritual world. It is at least a world of consciousness, where consciousness is apart from a material body, and without material qualities of any kind. Most religious people, not acquainted with the philosophical conceptions of the spiritual, as including intellectual and therefore scientific and philosophical activities, have identified the term with the emotional mental states connected with reverence and worship. In these they believe they become independent of sensuous and sensory experiences. It is non-sensory happiness or elation, some form of ecstasy, that defines the spiritual for them, even though the objective world be the exciting cause of all consciousness. They separate this spiritual experience from all scientific,

artistic, and ethical activities, and confine it to what they would call the religious emotions in the contemplation of the divine. They expect the spiritual life beyond the grave to be this in the absence of a sense life to distract or prevent the spiritual from obtaining proper expression. For this class, the spiritual world might or might not be a replica of the material world, provided only that, whatever it is, it offers no temptations to sin.

The representations of this world, however, as given by real or alleged communications with it, seem to ally it very closely to what we know of the material world. It is quite generally said to be very like this life and only a finer form of material substance, what we may call the supersensible side of the material world. The phenomena of apparitions would suggest this when taken superficially to represent reality. But the explanation of them, and the 'mental picture' method of communicating with the living, suggest a very great modification of that first supposition, and one can hardly calculate the changes in conception which they involve regarding the nature of the spiritual world. We are in the habit of regarding thought-consciousness as spaceless and as not necessarily implying a material world for its object. It is not extended, it is not coloured, it is not audible; it has

no sensory characteristics, even though memory pictures represent the reality which became known to us through sense in our first experiences. Apparitions superficially indicate a *quasi* material world, and so too the average communication with the 'spiritual' world. But we have found that apparitions and the visions of the psychic are mental creations, telepathic hallucinations perhaps, induced by the thoughts of the dead. These thoughts are supposedly not like things, though they can produce effects superficially like them. The spiritual world in this conception would seem to be a world of pure consciousness, which happens to produce simulacra of the material world under conditions necessary to adduce evidence of its existence.

To most people such a world would not appear to be very attractive. In spite of their antagonism to a material existence and its sensuous or sensory life, they at heart expect it to be this minus physical enjoyments, and in fact it may be such a world. But whatever it is, the phenomena of apparitions and mediumistic visions telepathically produced in the living suggest clearly that the spiritual world has its decidedly mental side, apparently creative of reality or the simulacrum of it. The representations of it make it appear like the material world, and this often comes in the details of the



statements about it. Can we form any hypothesis that will explain its seemingly mental and material character at the same time ?

We must remember that in our ordinary experience, as interpreted by the idealistic psychology, even our sensations of the material world do not represent it as it is. We think our sensations as reactions against a stimulus which is not like the sensation. That is, the world is not what it seems to be. The undulations which, on striking the retina provoke a sensation, are not like the light we see, according to the usual opinion. Our mind's reaction makes the light or the appearance of it, and the physical 'light' is wholly without resemblance to the sensation. It would thus appear that even the physical world is not seen as it is, and that in one sense we make what it seems to be. This is truer still of all the higher conceptions of things. We have to form our idea of what the solar system is by putting together ideally the separate experiences which enable us to construct a mental picture of it. The intellectual processes are always building up wholes which the senses do not reveal, and this is particularly true of those scientific hypotheses which take us far beyond sense, though the evidence of them is some effect in the field of sense.

But there is another step in our normal

experience that helps to suggest what may take place in a spiritual world. The imagination is an important function of the mind. It is both reproductive and productive, or representative and creative, if we may use this distinction. Its first function is to picture our past sensory experience, but it may act creatively, so to speak, and out of separate images form a whole which has no resemblance, as a whole, to any individual experience. Now in dreams, deliria, hypnosis, and hallucinations, this creative tendency of the imagination takes the form of apparent reality. Indeed, we mistake the apparitions of these states for reality, and would never be able to regard them otherwise but for our ability to pass judgment on them in our normal state, when we find that they are purely subjective products. These creations belong to the subconscious activities of the mind. It seems to be characteristic of these subconscious activities to produce images or apparitions, in any of the sensory centres, that are taken by the mind to be as real as we take the physical world in normal sensation. Now Mr. Myers maintained that it was the subliminal or subconscious part of the soul that survived, and, allowing for the fact that it is the sensory functions of man, as connected with the physical organism, that perish, we have the supposition that it is the creative functions

of the mind that survive. If this be true, the mind could create its own world after death just as it does in dreams, in deliria, and hallucinations. It might not require an objective world upon which to react; it would make its own in accordance with its earthly habits and tastes. If this life could be rationally organized and called a rationalized dream-life it might be made as ideal as some of our dreams are. Day dreaming and poetry in our normal lives are the best analogies of what this might be. Our moral and intellectual habits would determine what such a life would be, and whatever progress we made in the direction of idealism would depend partly on our earthly life and partly on the will or ability to correct any evil tendencies we might have had in the physical life. On this we cannot dwell here. It suffices to give readers a clue to it.

The hypothesis that apparitions and mediumistic pictures, of both the clairvoyant and the clairaudient type, are telepathic hallucinations produced by the dead, externalized or projected mental products, tends to suggest just this interpretation of the spiritual world. It makes it mental. It may not be wholly this. It is quite possible that the ethereal world is one of sense perception, an objective reality. But this does not interfere with the fact that thoughts on that side appear to the living as reality



when they are not this in accordance with our conception of external reality. But this hypothesis, that the spiritual world is reflected in these facts of 'mental pictures' appearing as realities, will explain all the contradictions in communications about that world. It makes the spiritual world preserve individuality in every form, whether good or ill, and if communication with it be established we should expect the differences of opinion about it to be greater than about the physical world, where the differences are great enough. Men carry into the spiritual world the ideas they had before death, and these, mixed up with what they learn of the other life, or possibly not changed at all in some instances, and perhaps a number of limitations about which we know little or nothing, might make messages about a transcendental life extremely various and contradictory; and if it be a dream life transmitted to us in the form of hallucinations, when communication is possible, we should expect all sorts of absurdities from the point of view of reality as conceived in physical terms. But it would be a consistent world for the imagination of each individual.

I have no assurance that this view of the matter is correct. Indeed, I do not think we have evidence enough to present it as a probable hypothesis. It is only possible along with much else that might be possible,

and explains much that is otherwise perplexing.

I cannot go into theories of the 'astral' or 'spiritual body,' nor into the question whether the spiritual and the material are related. I am indifferent to this matter, especially as there is nothing but speculation as yet to discuss, and I am interested in scientific problems. There is as yet no assurance of scientific evidence for the solution of it. When we have made allowance for the telepathic hallucinations into which apparitions and mediumistic visions are resolved, we have no criterion for assuredly determining as yet the nature of the spiritual world apart from the indications that it has a decidedly mental appearance.

## CHAPTER X

### MOTIVES AND SEQUEL

THE influences which affect the human mind when it is offered a chance to prove the faith which large classes believe, are very mixed. This is because there are so many interests to satisfy and so many prejudices to be removed. The attitude one has to take on the problem varies with the object which one has in the work. We should expect the religious mind, especially in this age, which so threatens the foundations of hope, to seize the opportunity with eagerness to obtain a system of apologetics as firm as the hills; but religion has seemed as antagonistic or as indifferent as science to the proof of survival after death. Science had some interests in looking askance at it or openly opposing it. But religion could not plead any dangers to its main principle, though perhaps fearful of disturbing some secondary features of its system. It had once based its whole system on immortality and the brotherhood of man. The latter lost its hold, but the former remained with tenacious



grip, sometimes defended by philosophy, and sometimes protected only by what it called 'faith,' which could give no reasonable defence except obstinacy for its refusal to seek rational proof. All this time it had constructed a vast system of apologetics, theistic and philosophic, for the very purpose of protecting its faith in something else than the primary basis of its theoretical beliefs about the cosmos; and hence, when scepticism had made havoc of its faith, it was strange to see it indifferent to efforts to prove what it had once said was proved by fact, scientific fact at that, at least in its claims. But, strange as it may seem, the indifference or antagonism on the side of religion was no less uncompromising than on the part of science. For, on the other hand, science, which had always insisted on the investigation of facts, balked at the demand to look in the face the residual phenomena of human experience which tended to prove that man had a soul. Of course it is easy to see why it did so. Its first great function was the reduction of the 'supernatural' to the narrowest limits, or even its exclusion from the world. This fixed clearly its interest against any real or apparent effort to restore that influence to its place. Hence the antagonism to psychic research only modified and perpetuated the old feud which has subsisted between

science and religion. Why did it do so just at the point where they might have been reconciled, and where natural human interests might have prompted both sides to an agreement ?

The source of the conflict between science and religion is not between the dogma of one and the dogma of the other. It goes far deeper than beliefs about the cosmos. It is not necessarily that science is opposed to the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. Neither is it the immortality of the soul as such that concerns most people. Nor would they be interested in the existence of God but for something else associated with the idea. We speak and think of men desiring immortality as one of their chief instincts. But this is true only with a qualification. *It is happiness that men seek.* They may not agree as to the kind of happiness that is wanted, but they all define that which they seek in terms of it. The mental state defined as happiness may be the same essentially in each man, but the objects qualified to give it certainly differ, if the mental states do not. Now men do not care for immortality unless it gives happiness. When they desire or say they desire a future life as the most priceless of boons, they have permanent happiness in mind, and not mere continuance of consciousness. If immortality were obtained

at the price of happiness, and involved perpetual pain, they would not desire it at all. Hence the phrase is only a subterfuge for what may not be a good. But it is happiness that is desired rather than mere existence, and it is the uncertainty that happiness is necessarily an ethical end that makes some minds critical of the need of either immortality or the belief in it. This aside, however, the point I want emphasized here is that the desire for happiness characterizes a type of mind which may not be scientific in its temperament, and it is here the conflict with science begins and continues. All beliefs about the universe, at least in modern times, have obtained allegiance only as they affected or were supposed to affect the prospect of happiness. No one would care so strongly for the existence of God merely to explain how the cosmos became what it is. The thing that gave theism its influence was the offer of salvation through the action of a divine being. It was supposed impossible to survive without the agency of God, and hence the belief in his existence became the security of one's hopes. It was the same with the belief in a future life. It had no value for its own sake. Merely prolonged consciousness, unless it carried with it happiness, might have scientific interest merely as a curious fact, but it would have no influ-



ence on conduct for those who wanted happiness besides continued consciousness.

Now science represents a different temperament. It seeks the truth, and eliminates from its account the desires and the emotional interests not founded on fact. It deals with the present and the past that can be proved, and with the past only as the present can prove it. It deliberately sacrifices hope and desire to ascertain facts, and so stands for everything that religion subordinates. Happiness is not its first aim, but truth, whether it brings happiness or not. It may find that truth and fact do not in reality sacrifice happiness, but it will not ignore the truth to get happiness. It always has the temperament of the Stoic.

The conflict between science and religion thus seems to be one between beliefs. But this is purely secondary. It is far deeper than this. It is a conflict between temperaments and desires, that extend over other fields of intellectual and moral activity as well. It is the conflict between fact and fiction, philosophy and poetry, realism and idealism, present fruition and expectation of it in the future. He who enjoys the present will not concern himself so much with the future. He who finds no satisfaction in the present will turn to hope and the imagination. To some minds the real and the actual give all the satisfaction

desired. To others it offers no boon at all, and they wish to live with the hope of getting what more fortunate natures have actually found. Now this conflict of temperaments presents itself in all fields of human activity. It divides different schools of literature, different schools of philosophy, different parties in politics, even different groups of scientific men and different types of religious minds. It is not limited to the opposition between science and religion as we have been accustomed to regard the matter. It is a difference in types of mind wherever occupied, and this gives the conflict a deep-seated character, which it would not have if it merely concerned the dogmas of science and religion. The difference is thus moral rather than intellectual. The intellectual differences would easily be reconciled if the moral were.

What the religious mind wants is poetry, not fact. Its whole history attacked the essentially evil nature of the material life, and it sought its expected happiness in an immaterial world, though it made this world the simulacrum of the material. It believed that the golden age had been lost because of sin, and that it could be recovered only in a life beyond the grave. It therefore depended on hope and the imagination for its gospel, and decried the present life as necessarily sinful and full of suffering,

though regarding it as the creation of the very Providence of whom it expected so blissful a reward as the restoration of Paradise. That it was hope and the imagination that dominated its ideas is clearly seen in the works of Dante and Milton. Both seized the poetic side of religion, and made themselves immortal by it. A sceptical age will not appreciate their poetry so much as a believing one, when the tendency of those who looked at their work as representing real expectations was not to think of it as poetry, as the reaction against this interpretation of religious ideas regards it. Milton and Dante will never be so great to a scientific age as they were to the religious period, which took their poetry as the representation of the real in some sense. The conflict, then, between science and religion is the conflict between fact and fancy, between reality and poetry, and that is much deeper than the conflict between intellectual propositions. The latter get their force only from their relation to the deeper opposition.

No one at the close of the Middle Ages would have cared a halfpenny for the change from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican system of astronomy, had it not been for the relation of the former to the religious ideals of the time. Theology had formed a compact system of cosmology related to



its scheme of salvation, and any disturbance to the integrity of that system carried with it the danger of loosening the allegiance to the doctrine of salvation and the life after death. But for this most people would have been as indifferent to one or the other astronomy, as they now are to the contending theories of physics and chemistry. They see no dangerous consequences to their morals or ideals from the controversy between undulatory and corpuscular physics. Science has won so many victories against mediæval beliefs that it no longer seems so dangerous. The inroad upon the poetic standard of truth has gained so much force, that the imagination can play little or no part in the formation of beliefs without entangling the human mind in the essentially unreal. Attachment to poetry and devotion to fact have changed places, and the enthusiasm is so great for the real, that the very idea of 'truth' is identified with fact more distinctly than with the ideals of hope.

I am not disputing here the values of hope and the imagination in human thought and action. I concede that they are as important as the interest in fact. Neither the past nor the present is the more important incident in human development. If man had no ideals, if he were not forced by his very nature to expect achievements beyond

what he has reached in the present, if he were merely the passive subject of external forces impelling him onward without volition of his own, he might dispense with hope and the imagination. But all his volitions are based upon fruition in the future, though that future may be only five minutes ahead. His whole nature as a thinking and conscious being requires him to look to an end not yet realized as a condition of all rational and self-active development. He is not like a dead lump of matter which is pushed forward by an external force. He can select and determine his own ends or results and thus make accretions to past achievements, however they may have been won. It is the future ends at which he can consciously aim, that make him a rational being and that give hope and the imagination as much importance as ascertaining what the facts of the past and the present are. Indeed the present has no importance but for its relation to that future, if man is to remain rational. It was the abuse of hope and imagination that brought the reaction toward the scientific spirit. These had neglected the real in the condemnation of the material world, and did not feel able to escape evil until they had escaped the body. It was a contradiction to make the world evil and at the same time the creation of a divine being who had no part in the material

world and was represented as wholly spiritual. Though the ideal had to be realized in the future, it was the present that was the probation for it, and ignoring this only brought Icarus from the clouds to a disastrous fall upon the earth. Had he remained where his duty was, his flight might have been more fortunate. But with all this we cannot lose sight of the fact that the future is always the key to the mental and moral efforts of man. Otherwise he has no duties at all, as these are but unfulfilled ideals which have no power or imperativeness unless the future can offer them a fruition.

We live in an age that demands certitude for any claim made on the will. It is perhaps not characteristic of our own age alone. It especially defined the intellectual movement set agoing by Descartes and followed up by the Kantian and post-Kantian thought; and perhaps our own period but reflects the momentum of that impulse. But the present day has become attached to scientific method as the means of obtaining it. The scepticism that assaulted the compact system of mediæval thought, especially in theology, left no dogma assured, and men either gave up the ideals that had regulated their conduct or sought to reassure themselves of their integrity. Through the centuries it had been tradition and authority that had protected them. It was a revela-



tion from the wise of antiquity that had moulded human life and thought. It was the ancients that were the wise and their dicta were not to be disputed, or were at least to be the safest guide we had. Men did not appeal to experience to prove the truth. It was contained in the wisdom of our forefathers. The social system favoured this point of view. It was the elders with whom knowledge arose and died. The younger generations were not capable of getting wisdom as had been their forbears. Every present fact or experience had to be gauged by its relation to authority and tradition, and accepted or rejected in accordance with that standard. The individual and his judgment had to be discounted in the adoption of standards of truth. No one could do his own thinking. It was done for him. Reverence for antiquity closed the doors against present experience, and the dead exercised a complete tyranny over the living.

It was science that completely changed all this. It accepted nothing from the past untested. It undertook to measure the truth by what it discovered in the present, and its forecasts were determined by the same criterion. It threw tradition and authority overboard, and put the responsibility for knowledge on the individual that sought it. It is the true heir of Cartesianism.

That philosophy told us that consciousness is the ultimate criterion of truth, but those who accepted this dictum still dallied with *a priori* methods, partly from the inertia of tradition and partly from the fear of trusting experience. The force of authority was too strong to yield to its competitor all at once. What was called empiricism was feared and hated as conceived to work in the interest of doubt and incertitude, as the reversal of all that the past had revered. This may have been natural enough, but it totally misconceived the spirit of empirical methods, though it did not misunderstand the temper and spirit of those who resorted to them. The empiricists were destructive and not constructive when it came to the ideals of the worshippers of tradition, and men do their fighting more on personal than impersonal lines. The empiricists were the sceptics, and perhaps the dogmatists were as much to blame for this as any falsity of method upon which they depended. With the empiricists the first thing was to set aside the errors of belief, and they saw no ideals to respect as yet. The great intact system of the Middle Ages crumbled at their touch, and the age of construction had yet to rise. It was the Copernican astronomy that first revealed the weakness of mediæval thought. It was Copernicus rather than Luther that initiated the Reformation. The whole Christian

scheme was closely associated with the Ptolemaic cosmology, and when the priest was once shown to be wrong in this general conception of the world, it was but a simple step to create distrust in everything else he maintained; and though that step could not be taken at once, it was taken as fast as education reached the masses. Logic always has its way when we are once assured of the premises, and Copernican astronomy established a leverage on the whole dogmatic system of the Middle Ages. It was an appeal to experience, to observation of present facts, and was quickly followed by the general renaissance in the same direction, which meant empiricism against dogmatism. Both schools instinctively saw the consequences. These were the breaking up of tradition and authority; but neither saw the constructive import of the new method and tendency. The one deplored its disturbance to the faith and the other welcomed it. The dogmatist had ideals and saw them dissolving in the light of the new knowledge. The scientist had no ideals of the kind and was not interested in defending any, as he was merely explaining things along lines opposed to religion. The dogmatic philosophers and theologians had forgotten the actual origin of their cherished beliefs; and so the appeal to the present for assurance of the truth seemed only like a device for undermining



the bases of the social structure, and as it offered no such salvation as men had sought it was accordingly distrusted.

Had the philosopher caught the real spirit of the Cartesian method instead of falling back into the slough of *a priori* speculation, he might have redeemed the situation both for himself and for science. The appeal to consciousness as the final and ultimate test of truth carried with it the implication that it is the present that bears the golden treasures of the past and the future. But it was not this that the Cartesian saw. He set about constructing a metaphysical theory of the soul instead of collecting facts for the inductive and empirical study of mental phenomena. But there was latent in his point of view the doctrine that it is the present moment that must be the primary source of what we know and of what we hope. It was this that constituted the spirit of science as against the authority of tradition. We, of course, wish to know the constant in nature. This is indispensable, and history or the study of the past is a most important method for ascertaining it. But history and tradition are likely to harbour as many illusions as truths, and we require a criterion to distinguish the one from the other. Besides, change is a fundamental law of progress, and we require to know wherein nature has changed her processes.

It is only the present that can supply the evidence of change and the criterion for distinguishing the constant from the variable.

Now science may be defined as the examination of a cross-section of evolution. In this conception of things we look at the world as a group of facts or a stream of events, and ourselves as spectators of them. We seize the present moment, which is a cross-section in that stream, and determine all that we can observe in it. We do not distinguish the events as either constant or variable, but simply as facts, perhaps different in kind. But by watching the panorama through successive moments, extending these into days, months, years, centuries, recording the facts carefully, we are able to ascertain what is permanent and what is transient. We can thus determine what history has left for the guidance of the present and the future. It is the permanent that decides for us the future. It represents what we call the law of nature, and by studying the permanent and transient elements in the passing moments we distinguish what is valid and what is not valid for belief and conduct in the data of the past. We discover where change has affected the material of nature and emancipate ourselves from the tyranny of the past or of the dead. History and tradition have their value. We should not know the full meaning of

the present but for them. They, however, do not determine for us any such assurance as we require in our knowledge and ideals of conduct. It is the present moment, and that only, which reveals what nature is doing, and we have to interpret the meaning of the world from what we find in that present. Postvision and prevision depend on it quite as much as upon the past, and only the present enables us to determine what is transient. Hence we may understand what Professor James meant by his 'radical empiricism.' He boldly claimed that 'radical empiricism' was the only safe source for the truth. He cut himself loose from tradition and *a priori* methods, and his appeal to experience seems to have frightened the religious mind and amused the lazy rationalist. But he was right. The ethical and religious mind has nothing to fear from 'radical empiricism.' Its fears are based upon a superstitious reverence for tradition and authority. It will not frankly give up its worn-out methods and trust science as the best guide into the truth. It has kept up the conflict with science until it will have nothing left unless it frankly repents in sackcloth and ashes, accepts conversion, and applies new enthusiasm to the recovered power which it will get by as much faith in the present as it has had in the past. No doubt the influence of associa-



tion in the use of the methods of science will make it fear the loss of some of its treasures ; but what it loses will be compensated in the assurance it obtains in place of a blind and baseless faith which has no power in an age that insists on certitude. What we want to know is, whether the statements about nature are true, and we can never decide this by quoting the opinions of our ancestors. We must decide it by an examination of nature herself. It is she that attests her own course ; and the past is responsible only for its own ideas, not for ours. Science is but a name for the interrogation of the present moment for assurance which tradition and authority cannot give. It is from the present moment that all our assurance comes, and as its facts carry with them our interpretation of both past and future, assuming that we can study successive moments of that present, we must expect to validate all the claims of men upon the truth by finding it verified in the present. If we cannot verify the past in the present, we have no security that this past represents facts at all.

I am not here suggesting or defending the claim that present enjoyment is the measure of our ideals. The values of existence may not be determined by the present. But we shall not know what nature intends to conserve unless we find the evidence of

it in the present as well as in the past. I admit that our duties are here and now, but we shall not understand what these duties are unless we ascertain what nature intends to have permanent. There are no duties that do not in some way point to the future. The past is finished, and suggests no obligations toward it save to recognize what it reflects of the laws of nature, which will always define the limitations under which ideals are to be realized. It is the future in which fruition is obtained for our volitions, and unless we know something of the laws that render this possible, action is confined to the enjoyment of the present moment alone. It is the past that helps us to see what is permanent, provided we can verify it in the present. Investments, political and social action, building, and in fact every act of man involving time for its realization, reckon on something permanent for their fruition. It will be the same with all alleged duties in respect to the inner life of man. If there be no future he must get his satisfaction out of the present where he is. He cannot be expected to make sacrifices unless there be some compensation. This compensation need not be an artificial reward. It may be no more than the consequences of the act. Sacrifice means the surrender of one desire for another, the one preferred being higher in

quality where duty is involved. But if the higher desire is not to be fulfilled, if the duty to act in that direction is not to have its object attained, we lose both it and the object of the desire sacrificed. The consequences are nil. There is no use to say virtue for virtue's sake. That means that we reap a pleasure in the act ; but I am here supposing that the pleasure is the consequence, and that this result is not gained. Desirable consequences are always the measure of what duty is, and man will not act unless his end is obtainable. He selects those ends which he knows are possible. If nature places the highest value on personality, and supersensible personality at that, the man who does not take account of it is not rational. We cannot determine the permanence of personality by any interrogation of the past. Nothing has been left to us of that but opinions and alleged facts, which have to be verified. It is the latter which are of importance, and hence we must seek in the present moment the facts which will enable us to gauge the future, from the probabilities that the law of nature remains the same. Hence it is science, not tradition, that must decide for us whether we have any reason to believe in personal survival after death. That is, science must decide whether there are any and what are the facts which justify that belief, by its



examination of the present and successive moments, so that it may fix the probabilities regarding the values which nature places on mental states.

It is not the consolation that man gets out of hope that gives the importance to the belief in a future life, though that is the main value assigned it by most people. It is the leverage which it gives the educator on the choice of ideals to be urged on men. The man who sees and performs his duty without regard to a future life may be just as good as the man who acts on the belief, but we forget where he got that conception of duty. It was the belief in the future life that fixed most of our best ideals, and adjustment to environment has done the rest. That environment will change with the change of ideals. Duty itself is determined by the future, and those natures which respect the ideas and customs of their environment, may not know how much their integrity depends on what a belief in the future has fixed. But aside from this, it is always the end that determines the nature of a man's conduct. The end which represents the preferred and the permanent object of nature, is the one that reason must use to elevate human conduct, and there is nothing like the permanence of personality to serve as a premise for the rational defence of moral ideals requiring the moderation

or sacrifice of physical enjoyment alone. We can influence man's conduct in only two ways: first, by reasoning with him; and second, by the establishment of restraints which involve some form of appeal to force, not to reason. Where we can reason we grant the largest amount of liberty, and where we cannot reason we restrict that liberty. Without a belief in a future life the function of reason in bringing about long-sighted conduct is restricted and more is left to force, and even this can accomplish nothing where it is not based upon rational beliefs. The belief in a future life is, therefore, the logical leverage on every man who claims to be rational, and will help us to secure conformity to conduct that estimates the inner moral life of man as above that of sense enjoyment. We already have that as a part of our inheritance from the past, but it was the doctrine of immortality that put it there; for it placed morality above æsthetics, which is the ruling feature of culture. It will disappear with the ideas that created it. Our æsthetic and ethical ideals die more slowly than our intellectual beliefs. We can change our convictions at once, but environment will not let ethical and other norms die so quickly. We are bred in them and they linger long after the bases which gave them currency have fallen into ruins. They are only partly de-

pendent on such bases. Our desires and interests are often much more bound up with our social environment, so that they can stand the shock of a complete change of intellectual beliefs until these work their way out into the community at large, and then the ethical succumbs to the corrosion which scepticism has established. Science has supplanted theology in the interpretation of the universe, and it must supply ethics with a basis or take the consequences. It has claimed the right to fix human beliefs, and it must protect human ideals. It has been as much mistaken in cultivating antagonism to the religious temperament as the religious mind has been in its attitude towards it; but both can come together in the belief of a future life. Religion will furnish the emotion and science the creed; but this cannot be done unless we can think the cosmos rational, and to make it rational we have to equate duty and expectation, and that can be done only by showing that nature is on the side of personality and its moral ideals.

No doubt the belief in immortality has been associated with many evils, but they have not been an essential feature of that belief. Abuses are always to be found in connection with ideals, but this is rather because of weaknesses in the men who hold and misinterpret them. It is the business



of the intelligent man to clear away the abuses that may happen to attend them. But they are accidents, not characteristics of the belief, and the admission of any undesirable associations with it is made to enable readers to see that I am not blind to the need of qualifying the claims for its importance. It may not be necessary for the man who can see and seek the ideal without being influenced by that hope. But many cannot be raised without the promise of compensation for the sacrifice, and we do not refuse to resort to rewards in our whole educational and disciplinary system. It is one of the means for making the higher ideals acceptable. I am not sure that any man escapes it, and certainly the best morality expects fruition for its ideals, and, as I have emphasized *ad nauseam*, the future is the only place to expect the realization of the end which is the justification of the ideal.

A curious attitude of mind infects many psychic researchers also in just this connection; it is caused by the feeling that they must imitate the function of the sceptic in dealing with the problem. They begin with admitting the desirability of proving the existence of a future life, and then set about their work as if their chief duty was to prevent our believing it. They conjure up every excuse for nullifying the evidence

adduced, while they pretend that they are seeking it with all their hearts. The sceptic and denier of it may be excused for this attitude. He does not want to believe it, and so he takes a consistent course in this. But for the psychic researcher to admit that it is desirable and then to impeach all the evidence, or refuse to admit there is any, is to play with human hopes, and to support the work simply for the sake of having intellectual amusement. All this came about in the following manner.

The founders of psychic research had to meet an overpowering scepticism and scientific ridicule. They believed there were phenomena that pointed distinctly to the survival of personal consciousness, but they did not think it amounted to scientific proof. They made concessions to the methods and demands of the sceptic and materialist, not because those demands were reasonable, but because they were strong enough to exercise great power in continuing doubt. They laid down standards of determining the validity of various phenomena which were not any better substantiated in science than was a future life, but which had power with the materialistic mind. When these had served their purpose in making the evidence that was accepted perfectly trustworthy, they should have been thrown aside, as is done in all other

departments of inquiry. But instead their followers cling to them as representing facts, when they never were facts but pure imagination, concessions to poor insight and intellectual obstinacy. In this they were stretching too far the influence of anxiety, previous knowledge, chance coincidence, guessing, telepathy, suggestion, and other such ideas, in order to protect themselves against the charge of credulity and to put the credulity on those who had so much faith in these alleged facts. But they should never have abandoned the vantage ground of asking for evidence that such explanations applied in any given case.

In no case has this policy been carried to a greater length than with telepathy. This has been made an Open Sesame to everything psychic, when it is not an Open Sesame to anything whatever. It is but a name, as we have shown, for certain facts not explicable in a normal way, but it offers no explanation of them. Those who 'strained' it so far beyond the evidence were moved by the illusory assumption that you must 'stretch' hypotheses 'to the breaking point' before abandoning them. This is true when you are trying to convert sceptics, but it is not true when engaged in scientific explanations; to do so in the latter case is only to play a double game on the borders



of hypocrisy. If you are engaged only in scientific explanations, you are bound to admit the relevance of the facts to a spiritistic theory, though you may prefer another. But when you are converting the sceptic, you do not admit the spiritistic theory, not because it may not be true, but because it has to be proved in spite of the prejudices and credulity of the sceptic. You concede all you can to show up the extremes to which he is willing to go in his disbelief. In the scientific problem, however, you must be independent of such prejudices. There was a time when concessions had to be made to the sceptic for the sake of peace. But when he becomes unreasonable, it is not our duty to respect him any longer. It is not our business to convert him. He must convert himself. Our business is the collection and recording of facts, and the future will take care of itself. Wisdom does not die with scepticism, valuable as that temper of mind has been in modifying the dogmatisms of the past. When he is in power, we may throw a sop to Cerberus to satisfy his hunger for the time, but when we have gained the main contention which we started out to establish, that certain coincidences are not due to chance, we may leave that hungry maw to its own devices. The ethical ideals are not on the side of destructive moods of mind. They are on

the side of constructive temperaments. Scepticism does well in removing abuses, but it is not the builder of civilizations. This task is left to constructive minds.

Now the belief in a future life is on the side of ethical ideals. The telepathy which credulous people stretch to infinity is not on the side of any ideals at all. There is not an ethical implication of any kind in the hypothesis of telepathy. Applied as it is, it only reflects as demoniac a process, as one might well imagine. Here is a process which has infinite selectiveness where it comes to acquiring information relevant to the personal identity of the dead, intelligent enough to discriminate against irrelevant facts, and yet lying about whence it gets the facts. Such a process, all subconscious, cannot be brought to account at all. A process which has no ethical implications, and which is so shrewdly intelligent in finding the right facts while concealing their real source, is not to be admired either as an explanation or a preserver of morality. People who trust it certainly have no sense of humour. The spiritistic theory has ethical implications and explanatory power; telepathy has neither, and when examined reveals an infinite source of perfectly incurable deviltry and lying. Is this the kind of thing with which science expects to regenerate the

human race? We talk of the importance of psychic research; but this consists in relegating spirits to the limbo of imagination and setting up the worship of telepathy in their place. We pretend that we are seeking evidence for spirits; but we are exploiting the interest of others to have them pay the bill for establishing a telepathy which leaves no room for ideals or morality of any kind, to say nothing of its denial of the suit which man makes for some rational meaning to the cosmos. Men and women have no sense of humour who do not see this.

I repeat that, as a concession to the sceptic, it may be all very well, but this assumes that we either admit the adequacy of the spiritistic hypothesis to explain the facts, or that we are so sure of its truth that we can yield all sorts of absurd possibilities to embarrass the sceptic by exhibiting his credulity instead of showing it ourselves. There is no other excuse for the application of telepathy in its most extended meaning. We have already shown that it has no basis in fact of any kind when extended to the selective form which excludes the law of stimulation; but we may be justified in waving the claims of spirits to force the sceptic to accept something a thousandfold more absurd or impossible. He it is that must bear the burden of ridicule, if he remains obstinate against



spirits. And we may challenge him to produce an ethics for us on the basis of his strenuous disbeliefs. Here it is that his position must win or lose. In fact, scepticism never founds any constructive ethics. Its service is exhausted in destroying abuses. It never constructs. A future life gives the supreme value to personality. Telepathy gives it none at all, but rather makes it a playful demon bent on universal deception. We may challenge the obstinacy of scepticism by demanding that it accept this alternative, if it will not yield to a belief that supports some kind of idealism. But it can gain respect on no other terms. I do not refuse scepticism a value in life. It is the obverse of the shield of which faith is the reverse, and is the corrective of the abuses of faith. It plays as important a part in salvation as faith, and, indeed, reason and science are the correctives of both, and science is constructive. Real explanation always is such. It is causal. Telepathy is not causal at all. It is only descriptive of events. It is only a device for postponing the day of judgment, and so is a piece of tactics to embarrass the sceptic and to bring him into ridicule. The morality and idealism are all on the side of spirits which represent the value of consciousness and personality in the universe. Telepathy offers no such values. It not only strength-

ens the case against the persistence of personality, but makes it, while it lasts, the arch-fiend of human subconsciousness. Is that to be the boon which materialism offers man? Are we to exorcise spirits with the idealism they founded for telepathy which brings only despair to the broken human heart? Can the materialist assuage grief? Can he repair the influence of sorrow? Does telepathy offer to do this? It is respectable, but that is all. It has no ethical implications to protect human values, and, when stretched to infinity, is only the plaything of those who have neither scientific insight nor moral ideals. In fact, our duties are to extend the spiritistic hypothesis and to minimise the character and application of telepathy when dealing with the scientific problem, and we are not justified in extending telepathy except as a device for embarrassing scepticism.

There are certain beliefs that are pivotal, and this means that many others depend on them for their meaning and use. The immortality of the soul is one of these. It affects human life at so many points that its motive power depends upon the influence which this initial belief can give thought and action. The fact of a future life is a major premise on which many a conclusion of importance can rest in security, and it is that fact which gives it supreme value in the

moral education of the race. Human nature is bad enough to defy the best of beliefs, but the educator and the statesman can do more with men on the basis of this belief than without it. The value of personality is a leverage on the tastes and habits of the man who will act in the direction of physical ends when he has no reason to believe that any other are respected by nature. I have already discussed this point, and I allude to it again only to reinforce the pivotal nature of the belief. Analogies of this function are easily found in other beliefs.

The rotundity of the earth had no importance in astronomy at large. No pivotal character attached to it in that respect. But it was otherwise with the theory of Copernicus. His view of the relation of the parts in the solar system gave unity and explanation to the whole cosmos in its relation to the earth. The Ptolemaic system involved complications in the movements of other bodies, solar and stellar, that were miraculous, but the simple fact that the earth revolved on its own axis and about the sun reduced the whole universe, as seen from the earth, to simplicity. This one belief regulated all others in regard to the system.

Adhesion, as an attractive force, has no pivotal meaning for the cosmos in general. But gravitation has such a meaning. Newton's hypothesis gave the universe a



unity which even the Copernican system did not. Copernicus rewrote astronomy for mathematics, Newton for physics as well. The two doctrines were pivotal inasmuch as they determined the nature and validity of many minor facts and beliefs.

Darwinian evolution, again, was pivotal for the beliefs affecting the processes of creation. It did for time what Copernicus and Newton did for space, and many a belief which had attached itself to the Ptolemaic system or to the special creation theory, dissolved, the one before the doctrines of Copernicus and Newton, and the other before that of Darwin. The cosmos assumed a new order under the ægis of these scientific certitudes.

It must be the same with the scientific proof of a future life. It will not do to say that men have always believed it. That is true enough, but beliefs which have only faith for their protection never have logical power. You cannot reason with them or upon them. They may affect the lives and actions of those who hold them, but faith is no weapon for conversion. It may affect the will of the man who has it, but it will not influence the intellect or will of any one else, from lack of the rational means to make conversions. Where faith alone is the basis of action, men make conversions only by force or war. Scientific certitude gives reason

a means of proof and the substitution of reason for force. It is one of the most powerful influences for the brotherhood of man that can be presented. It is perhaps significant that the founder of Christianity linked them together. It is pivotal because it thus protects all the higher ideals of belief and conduct, and gives the universe a meaning which it either cannot obtain without it, or obtains with such uncertainty as to make the ethical motives dependent on it compete at a disadvantage with the certitudes of physical life. A man who is surer of his wheat crop and the satisfactions resulting from it than he is of a future life will concentrate the interest on the prospect of an earthly reward ; but a man who sees that consciousness is the permanent thing, whatever he does with reference to his material goods, will keep a moderating eye on the future life.

It is materialism that has broken down the morality that Immanuel Kant admired and defended. The larger ideals which Christianity fostered, whether it was right or wrong in its general view of the world, have given us a better civilization than Greece or Rome ever had. But materialism is now doing the same for us that it did for Græco-Roman morals. It concentrates human endeavours on physical satisfactions. Idealistic philosophers will tell us that

materialism is dead and that nobody believes in it. This is not true, and only a man entirely ignorant of the meaning of the term or of human nature would make any such statement. It is true that the philosophers do not advocate materialism, and it is also true that very few will boast that they accept it. But this has nothing to do with the question. They have reasons for not undertaking the defence of it. Religion is still strong enough to make it imprudent to be known as a materialist; and so we can manage to change the meaning of the term and then deny the doctrine, and thus fool ourselves and others with the belief that we have escaped all that materialism stands for. We can deny the use of the term but hold its doctrine. Idealism, as conceived and defended since Kant, is not opposed to philosophical materialism. It may even be identical with it. We have only to identify materialism with sensationalism psychologically and with sensuous enjoyment ethically to make ourselves seem opposed to it. But psychological and ethical materialism was never the essence of materialism. They were its adjuncts and consequences. True materialism was always quite as supersensible in its basis as spiritualism, and a man is only equivocating who denies materialism and does not deny the philosophical and scientific conceptions on which it is



based. Materialism is convertible with the proposition that consciousness is a function of the brain and hence that there is no soul. Idealism seldom denies that consciousness depends on brain structure and the organism. Until it can make good that denial it does not oppose it, but only equivocates and relies upon the priority of value in intellectual and moral mental states as distinguished from sensory enjoyment; and this view may be held right within the materialistic theory. Most of the opposition to materialism is only a subterfuge to save one's bread, while the real thing goes on making its conquest and silently inoculating the general mind with the ideas of sense. The real test of a man's attitude toward materialism is determined by his position as to immortality. If he ignores, doubts, or denies it, he may deny materialism as much as he pleases, but his denial will fool only the groundlings; and so men will choose the life which nature offers with assurance, ignoring all claims to consider the larger view which a future existence establishes. The logical consequences of philosophical materialism and also of ignoring the issue are the same, namely, the preference for physical satisfaction. *Æsthetics* and intellectual gymnastics will be our only ethics on that basis. The finer spiritual graces will have no adequate reward for the

sacrifice of the physical. The actual life about us is proof of this statement.

In all this I do not lose sight of the fact that physical satisfactions always have their relative values. Materialism is not an un-mixed evil. In the last analysis it stands for an important truth which we can admit when spiritualism has triumphed. Religion has tended to make the spiritual convertible with caprice in the cosmos as represented in the idea of miraculous interventions of all kinds. But materialism stands for constancy, the unchangeableness of God, to use that phrase. It has its eye fixed on the regularity of the laws of nature, and this is quite as important for human life and evolution as any conceivable intervention in the order. It is the concession which nature makes to time, while change is the concession to the need of progress. Stability and progress are both ideals, though one represents constancy and the other change. Materialism stands for constancy, and spiritualism for change, but not in the same thing.

Moreover, physical satisfaction is not in itself an evil. Everything depends on the point of view and the attitude of mind. If physical satisfaction is the only thing sought it is wrong. When it is conceived as the ultimate end of action it becomes an evil, but as a means to higher ends it is legitimate enough. Spiritualism is an attitude of mind

toward the dogma of the ultimateness of physical life, not an opposition to physical life. In controversy it often, perhaps always, has to adapt its discussion to suit the discrimination between physical and spiritual wants which seem opposed to each other. But it is only a question of means and ends. It opposes only the priority of the physical and the view that nature values only that end. When it can subordinate the physical to the remoter end of the spiritual, it concedes a relative legitimacy and right to the physical life, but it can never make it more than a transitional stage to the spiritual life, and that is its basis and justification. A defensible idealism will admit the physical to its proper place in the scheme of things, but will not allow it to usurp the primacy. So much materialism is entitled to have, but it is not entitled to deprive spiritualism of all basis for the realization of its ideals. It is a future life that guarantees this, and any sacrifice of this basis only increases the difficulties in getting moral ideas of the highest type to become effective.

The man with a good salary and leisure to pursue his tastes may feel satisfied with any order in the world, and he too often does so. The world seems good to him who gets what he wants. But satisfaction may blind him to the real nature of things. And if this is true, we must look with some tolera-



tion and sympathy on the man that quarrels with the world when he does not get any satisfaction out of it. Fortunate is, then, the man who can still wait for the future to give a chance for achievement. If suffering teaches us that we have the wrong ideal in pursuit, it has thus its justification, and it is the man who complacently rests in present satisfaction that will have the awakening when he finds it is not all to live physically.

Nor is the intellectual life all of the spiritual. It has no justification at all, except as a means to an end. Unless it directs the emotional and ethical life, it is no better than the materialism which it often despises. It is delightful to study our Plato and Aristotle, but our butcher who supplies us with our beefsteaks has no time for that luxury, and if he lends us part of the sum of leisure that enables us to indulge in that luxury, we owe him at least a chance to get some spiritual culture. The present social system makes the payment of that debt either impossible or ineffectual, and we owe it to the world to secure for him, if we can, the time to acquire such culture. Moreover, it is not the purely intellectual life that ensures salvation. It is the social that does so, and a *quid pro quo* for intellectual opportunities must be given to those who make leisure and culture possible. Salvation is an attitude of mind toward others, and he who

taxes the community for his enjoyment and makes no return, no matter what his intellectual achievements, does nothing to ensure his own true development. In a system which requires so much time and labour to support mere existence, we should do all we can to secure the time and conditions for extending the chances for ethical progress. It is the assurance of the immortality of the soul that can be the great leveller in this respect and open up opportunities that a purely physical life does not provide.

There is no reason short of the proved fact to justify drawing the line of hope and self-realization at the grave. And if it be a fact that we perish utterly, there is no reason for shaping conduct for any object which requires a longer time than the present life to realize. But if it be not a fact, and if we do survive, then it is more than rational, it is imperative, to take into account conditions beyond the grave in the adoption of rules of conduct. Unless we have proof that annihilation is the meaning of death, drawing the line at the grave is arbitrary. The best ethical maxims have an import beyond that, if Kant's position has any validity at all, and we find philosophers urging the finality of his views even when they do not sympathize with psychic research. Ethical maxims involving spiritual development do not shorten the time for their imperativeness. To-

morrow is quite as transcendental to human ethics as the day after we die; and it is not time that limits the fitness of moral duties, but only the impossibility of reaching our ends. There can be no proof that we are annihilated; so that the question is always open for the possibility of survival, and hence the rationality of seeking to know if it be a fact. Once concede the fact or the probability of it, and then death will no more alter the laws of morality than does a political election. We can nullify ethics only when hope is shut off, as all conduct involves the future for the attainment of its ends, even if it is only the next minute. Long-sightedness is a mark of the rational man, and hence the more that he makes the present yield to the future the higher the type of man, though this must not be purchased at the expense of present duties. All that I am contending for is the place of time in the formation of ideals, and that the grave is not the end of them unless it is also the end of human life.

In times of degeneracy the human race remembers the past as the most brilliant part of its experience, and in its periods of progress it dreams of a better future, for it is never really satisfied with the present, and rarely thinks the actual condition of things poetic. Sin and suffering offer no spectacle for appreciation, and better natures look to the future for a better life. It is



the past and the future that get the glamour of poetry, and we either mourn over what we have lost or we dream over what we expect.

It was in the twilight of fable, the beautiful youth of man, that antiquity placed the Golden Age, the period and the people who were nearer the gods. But at the first touch of philosophic reflection this splendid fabric of the imagination crumbled into ashes, and thereafter Epicurean materialism came to pave the way to the grave of Græco-Roman civilization. Christianity rose on these ruins, still lingering on the legend of the Garden of Eden, but placing the recovery of the Golden Age in the future life beyond the grave, where sin and suffering that had so marred the present life should be no more, and where hope could be safe from the attack of science. But after it had ruled eighteen centuries with this belief, science came again with its materialism to deprive man of the ideals both of history and hope, leaving nothing but darkness on the horizon of that immortal sea that brought us hither, while the cypress and the pine still keep watch over the gates to immortality and God. If science cannot point a way out of this blank outlook, another must take up its task and give men a creed by which they can live, and a hope that on this black and stormy horizon shall dawn another morning.

The present moment which had been saddened by the gloomy fears of death will be cheered by a fairer outlook, and chastened by toil and pain man may hope to be happy yet.

All experience is an arch wherethrough  
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades  
Forever and forever as we move.

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