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Psychical Phenomena and Human Needs

GARDNER MURPHY

INTRODUCTION

Physical events depend upon energy; and as far as we know psychological events depend upon motives. More and more clearly, as we have learned to observe human nature, we have found that perception does not "just happen"; rather it expresses the dynamics of individual personality. We do not see with our eyes; we see with everything that we have, everything that we are. We manage to exclude to some degree what we do not wish to see; we manage to focus upon, or anchor upon, that aspect of reality which comes to meet our needs. This principle appears to apply to every form of perception, both normal and paranormal. It therefore seems appropriate in psychical research to study, as closely as we are able, the way in which the individual focuses his powers of perceiving, emphasizing what he needs, excluding what he cannot use.

It will never be enough to say that a person perceives paranormally because he is "gifted." Granted that he must

have the gift if he is to see, questions arise as to *why* he sees on some occasions but not on others, *why* he picks out the things he does, *what sort of relation* obtains between the kind of person he is and the things that come through to him. Two men faring through a forest on a murky night will see different things not only because they have different eyes, but also because they have different expectations, different hopes, different fears. And behind the hopes and fears that they can put into words lie *deeper patterns* of hope and fear—a whole system of needs and attitudes—that express different individualities. Perhaps the effort to understand a little more fully the role of motivation will help towards the ultimate goal of understanding all the paranormal processes.

It was, I think, William Mackenzie who first systematically explored the role of such personal dynamics, especially unconscious dynamics, in relation to our field.¹ For him the deepest needs of the sensitive, as well as those of the sitter, constituted centers of energy which sought expression in the phenomena of reverie and trance, never projecting their form upon the upper level of consciousness in a *simple, mechanical* way, but expressing that *plastic, creative* vitality which characterizes all unconscious dynamics. To be sure, Mackenzie seems today to have given psychoanalytic interpretations a wider role than is necessary, in view of other sources of knowledge about motivation; and he stressed the "teleplastic" phenomena of materialization far more than seems warranted. But the fact remains that his work threw into sharp relief the need for a full and patient consideration of all paranormal phenomena in the light of human needs.

In this connection, we cannot emphasize too strongly that the time has passed when one could set paranormal experience in *opposition* to normal experience, regarding the tendencies of the two types of experience as antithetical. There is no place today for that type of analysis which tries

¹ *Metapsichica Moderna*, Rome, 1923.

to force a paranormal dream into a special category where the normal psychology of the dream is no longer operative. As far as we know, the laws of Nature do not suddenly abdicate. Rather, it is through the normal psychology of the dream, or of waking life, that special conditions are sometimes achieved in which the paranormal may emerge. As Mackenzie said, it is the one who delves into the depths of the normal personality who will come out with a clue to paranormal dynamics.

Throughout the history of our subject, spontaneous cases of telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition have been more and more systematically studied with these considerations in mind. If one surveys, year by year, the cases reported by the Societies for Psychical Research, one finds, as we approach the present time, more and more attention given to dynamics, and an ever-increasing interest in conscious or unconscious motivation. Standards of *evidence* were established at a high level in the 'eighties, but on the psychological side the early cases often seem relatively bleak; almost nothing but the obvious surface wants and interests of the percipients is discussed. The contrast is striking if one looks at recent publications; they are full of good psychological suggestions; the cases "live" in more vivid, dynamic terms.

But here it must be confessed that there is a very, very long way to go; we are only catching glimpses, not seeing vistas. We know but little about the vast world of unconscious needs. What the psychiatrist has picked up is mostly what is forced upon his attention by disturbances in the universal biological tensions connected with reproduction and self-preservation; there has not been time for the recognition of the less obvious, more complex, more highly individualized tensions, nor for the study of the inner characteristics of the creative processes themselves. Consequently, the present paper is an *essay* only. It offers *tentative* hypotheses about human wants in relation to paranormal ways of perceiving, and it may be useful in focus-

ing our study of future spontaneous cases, or even an aid in designing our future experiments; but it is *not* a system of beliefs to be defended. It is an experiment in a way of looking at our phenomena.

Normal Perception, Memory, and Thought

We shall begin by referring to the recent revolution in psychology relative to the role of motivation in our ways of making contact with the outside world. Almost all studies of perception, of memory, and of thought up to the present century emphasized the sense organs and the brain as instruments for mediating reality to us. Philosophers might argue as to the existence of an external world; but in the practical task of trying to explain why a man saw, they followed Newton in studying light and Helmholtz in studying the structure and function of the eye. Similarly, they studied memory as an expression of traces left in the brain by past experience, and thought as an intellectual reorganization of these materials. The problem has been revolutionized by studies which resulted in the formulation of three principles: (1) The principle of figure and ground, (2) the principle of mental set and (3) the principle of autism.

(1) The principle of figure and ground indicates that experience is never in the form of a homogeneous blur or global total, but that a part always stands out against a background; the part which is *figure* is accented by the perceiver or thinker, and is usually the starting-point for other mental processes or for action, the rest being ignored.

(2) But as we confront a new situation, one aspect of it may be the *figure* for one man, another aspect for the other man. What determines the issue? Experimentally it may easily be shown that one is in a state of readiness, or *mental set*, for one aspect, not for another. Give your subject a collection of varicolored objects of different shapes, and ask him to count the number of red ones. When he

has done this, ask him how many of them were triangular. He is lost. Tell another subject to ascertain how many are of triangular shape. He does well; but he cannot tell how many were red. One does not perceive "what is there," and much less does one recall "what is there." *Mental set* determines what is to be figure, and the rest is neglected.

But what kinds of mental sets are there, what is their relative importance, and how are they interrelated? Very broadly, any motive, tension, or need constitutes a mental set. The Arctic explorer dreams of verdant fields; even the wary psychical researcher "sees" a cheque in an opened envelope, admires its pale marbled colors—a cheque which unfortunately was never there! The mental sets of the laboratory are temporary affairs, but they operate exactly as the more enduring needs operate. As far as we know, mental sets are temporary tension systems within the organism, and are functionally like the tensions which we recognize when we speak of anxiety or hate as involving tensions. All the human motives which have been closely studied have proved to consist of tensions—regions of high energy concentration. We shall then conclude that there are as many mental sets as there are dispositions of the individual to want, or need, to experience tension; that their relative importance is the relative importance of the underlying needs in that particular person; and that since all parts of the organism intercommunicate with all other parts—tensions flowing and spreading to arouse other regions—there are mixed motives, multiple tensions.

(3) The principle of *autism* is the "tendency of cognitive processes to move in the direction of tension-reduction." The wish is not only father to the thought; it is the father of the perception, and of the act of recall. One sees, recalls, thinks, not only in terms of the structure of the thing actually given, but in terms of the figure-ground relations, the mental sets at work. It should be clear that the term "wish" is insufficient. A man may see not only what he

wishes but also what he fears; the real principle is not the wish as such, but the tension. The need may quite literally be the "need" (in the biological sense) to see a burglar when one is in the tension of frightened uncertainty, or to find an insult in an innocent remark. Most autistic processes may give pleasure, because they reduce tension and this is usually pleasant; but this is incidental. The important thing is to study the tensions of the individual, and to note how the experience is organized for the individual around these tensions, while for a person with a different system of tensions a different organization of experience is found.

Since the concentration of energy within a given region is not static, but tends to increase or decrease, we have learned to associate motives with the decrease of such energy concentration; in other words, with the *reduction of tension*. Popular speech and common sense coincide in stressing tension as an aspect of motivation. A man is "tense" until he has allayed his fears, vented his rage, cleared himself of an unjust charge. One speaks of getting a thing "off one's chest." Though analogies are dangerous, what happens in the organism when tension is reduced might well be compared to what happens in a chemical reaction (such as a fire or an explosion) when concentrated energy is dissipated in heat or other forms of energy.

It may reasonably be asked whether distressing experiences, such as continuing anxieties or nightmares, really arise from motivation. We have already indicated that the process of motivation is not necessarily pleasant. But we must add that anxiety and other related tension states are typically efforts to defend oneself against threat or danger. They are attempts to be prepared against a surprise; thus fear may be regarded as a device for getting us out of the situation which the danger would bring us were we unafraid.

This, therefore, gives us our hypothesis: Perception occurs in such fashion as to reduce tension, or to meet needs.

Experiments in Autism

Let us look to psychological experiments to see whether this is in fact the case. At Cambridge, England, F. C. Bartlett³ devised a number of methods for the testing of the autistic tendencies. Narratives presented to a subject and relayed by him to another subject underwent a series of transformations; each person participating in the retelling threw out items which were unacceptable from his point of view and unconsciously reconstructed the story to make it compatible with his own ways of thinking. In the Columbia University laboratory, Sherif⁴ showed that judgments of the distance transversed by a point of light in the dark-room consistently indicated the *need of the subject to be in agreement with others*, i.e., "the leveling influence of the group"; and in a later study that a naïve subject systematically adjusted her way of seeing until she saw the light as an expert would see it. At Harvard, R. N. Sanford⁵ found that ambiguous pictures were interpreted in terms of food objects with increasing frequency as his subjects went longer and longer without food, and R. Levine⁶ found similarly, at City College, that ambiguous pictures shown behind ground glass screens were more and more frequently interpreted as food objects as the hours after eating a meal increased. We may, then, say that in all these cases perception moves in the direction of need satisfaction, tension reduction. To some degree the narrative and the ambiguous picture can be "perceived" in such a way as to relieve tension. The autism operates in a way which permits a satisfying or tension-reducing aspect of the perceived object to be selected as figure, the non-satisfying aspect serving as ground. In R. Levine's experiment, for example, those lines and shadings which sug-

³ Bartlett, F. C., *Remembering*, Cambridge University Press, 1932.

⁴ Sherif, M., *The Psychology of Social Norms*, New York, Harpers, 1936.

⁵ Sanford, R. N., "The Effects of Abstinence from Food upon Imaginal Processes," *Journal of Psychology*, 1936, 2, pp. 129-136.

⁶ Levine, R., Chein, I., and Murphy, G., "The Relation of the Intensity of a Need to the Amount of Perceptual Distortion: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of Psychology*, 1942, 13, pp. 283-293.

gested food were thrown into relief and organized into food objects; the rest was neglected.

This hypothesis about autism and the figure-ground relationship was directly tested by R. Shafer⁷ at City College. He presented to his subjects, during a "training" period, opposite complementary aspects of contour lines, each aspect being capable of being seen as a face in profile. Whenever one aspect of the face was presented he gave his subjects a small money reward, taking away the money whenever the other aspect was shown. As a result of this training period, such firm associations were established that when rewards were discontinued, and the subjects were shown the contour line within a complete circle (in which situation either of the two profiles could be discerned) they saw only that face which had been "rewarded," not the face which had been "punished." The subjects were in general *unable* to see the face except in the way in which it had been rewarded; that face became *figure* for them, the opposite aspect *ground*. They learned, that is, to organize or experience autistically, in a drive-satisfying way.

Motive and Figure-Ground Relations in Spontaneous Telepathy

Though these aspects of tension reduction and of autism seem obvious enough when attention is directed to them, it is, I think, likely to be forgotten that *paranormal* perception usually has been studied in terms of the older view of perception—perception treated without reference to motives, almost as if it were a mirror. In the light of our present approach, it would seem much more likely that paranormal perception, as well as normal perception, is organized in terms of *needs*; in all the vast world, one selects to serve as "figure" that which is most directly related to one's motivation. Since we have found, decade

⁷ Shafer, R., and Murphy, G., "The Role of Autism in a Visual Figure-Ground Relationship," *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, Vol. 32, No. 4, April, 1943, pp. 335-343.

by decade, more and more reason to believe that Myers was right in emphasizing the unconscious nature of paranormal processes, it would naturally be to the unconscious, but profound and enduring, motivations that we should turn for our clues.

Suppose, for example, that a mother is busy with her housework or with her baby and has at the time no conscious need to concern herself with her older boy, who is away on a trip with his companions. Suppose, though, that the boy falls into a pond and narrowly escapes drowning. If the mother has a vision in which he is portrayed as sinking and calling for her, we need not regard this as something which emanates exclusively from him, as he knocks, so to speak, at the door of her mind. Rather, it is probable that she has been unconsciously, but continuously, "reaching out" to him in her need to know where and how he is. Regardless of her conscious activity at the time of the crisis, we may regard her as unconsciously needing contact with him, and keeping, as it were, an eye upon him whether she is awake or asleep. We should expect paranormal impressions to come to the individual not simply in terms of the possession of psychic gift but rather in terms of what it is he basically wants to see, wants to hear, wants to know. If we could understand his unconscious motives, we would know what it is that is open to him. And just as we said above, in reference to the often painful character of what is autistically perceived (as deriving from our need to know the worst in order that we may protect ourselves from it), so we can meet the objection that many paranormal impressions, far from being "satisfying," are in fact distressing. They are, I think, distressing because those who experience them love the persons who at the time are undergoing accident or other tragedy. It is not that the mother wants her son to be in danger; it is, rather, that if he must be in danger *she wants to know about it*.

We can now proceed to discuss the more obvious motives which appear as clues to paranormal experiences. Although

sometimes motivation may be so complex and so subtle as to evade analysis, we have nevertheless found that a simple, rule-of-thumb classification, in terms of the more obvious and universal human needs, takes in the great majority of the well-authenticated cases of spontaneous telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition. The motive of *love*, in the broad sense of the feeling between all those who are dear to one another (including relations between parents and children, brothers and sisters, etc., as well as husbands and wives), is by far the largest single category. The various ego tendencies, such as self-justification and the need to protect oneself from danger, also play a large role. Motivation, in certain types of cases, must also be studied from the point of view of the agent as well as from the point of view of the percipient.

Motives, moreover, as we have seen, are interconnected, and in dynamic relation to one another. Two conflicting motives may at times paralyze the individual. More frequently, one motive may be victorious and the other blocked and held in abeyance; e.g., deep hatred may be covered over by a moral education which enables the individual to believe that he is devoid of all such socially undesirable emotions, yet the hate may express itself indirectly. Or at times a union of motives may be effected by the discovery of objectives which satisfy them both simultaneously.

Before proceeding to the classification proper, I wish to refer at some length to a recent paper⁸ by Miss G. M. Bishop, a Member of the S.P.R. Because of her astute recognition of the importance of motivation and of the subtleties displayed in their operation, it is urged that the paper be read in full; the summary below can do justice neither to the dreams themselves as evidence for precognition nor to the author's keen analysis of their psychological and physiological background. Those who read the original will note the combination of motives, as in Miss Bishop's fear mingled with love of animals, and the conflict of

⁸ *Journal S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXII, April-May, 1941, pp. 50-59.

motives, as in her sense of guilt overpowered by her desire to maintain an acceptable picture of herself.

Miss Bishop prefaces her tabulation of 14 dreams experienced during a three years' period by explaining that she became interested in watching her own dreams from the point of view of possible precognition after reading J. W. Dunne's book, *An Experiment with Time*. During the autumn of 1935, therefore, she began to keep a file in which she noted a number of dreams which might relate to future events. Her purpose was not to obtain evidence, as such, that precognition occurs (she lived alone and corroboration would not have been feasible); rather her aim was to see if she could throw some light on the dynamics of precognitive dreaming. Most of her dreams seemed to relate to material contained in the next morning's newspaper. She remarks that, living alone and quietly at the time, the paper was the chief event of the day. Quoted below are two such dreams from among the 14 presented in her tabulation:

No. and Date	SUMMARY OF DREAM	APPARENT REFERENCE	COMMENT
11. Sept. 19, 1937	Was on a mountain-side, afraid to go on, as I was on the edge of a precipice. A man whom I felt to be a good mountaineer, offered to take me roped to him, but I was afraid if I fell I might pull him down too.	<i>News Chronicle</i> for Sept. 20 had an article prominently headed "Rope Saves Climber after 200 ft. Mountain Fall. Lowered to Safety by Doctor Companion," and a smaller article below it headed "Londoner's Crash Down Cliff." The first related the rescue of a Cambridge undergraduate.	No memory of any other similar dream. Am very nervous of heights. Am a graduate of Cambridge myself. Possibly a case of clairvoyance in space (but Miss Bishop rejects this hypothesis in later discussion).
13. Feb. 27, 1938	Dreamed I could not find my dog, then heard that she was in a room which was terribly hot. Went to the room and rescued her—it was as hot as a furnace and I pulled her to safety in the open air.	<i>Telegraph and Post</i> for Feb. 28 (I had changed from the <i>News Chronicle</i> recently and was taking the <i>Telegraph</i>) had a story headed "Families Escape. Men go back for Pets," describing the rescue of a dog and cat from a bedroom which was "like a furnace" following a fire.	Have dreamt at intervals that I had lost my dog, to whom I am much attached but not that I had to rescue her from a fire.

Miss Bishop's first observation of a general nature is that, although her waking interests are mainly intellectual, not one of her dreams related in any way to these interests. The subject-matter of the dreams was of an apparently trivial sort and completely useless as material for action. In almost every case, however, the material had strong emotional significance for her and this she traces in some

detail in all the dreams presented. In regard to the two dreams quoted above, she says, "I have all my life had an instinctive fear of heights, so much so that though I lived in Switzerland for years I never dared to climb. This dream is therefore linked with a subconscious fear," and "I am so attached to my little dog that anything involving or suggesting her is of strong emotional significance to me." Miss Bishop also made some observations of a physiological nature: in the autumn of 1935 she was convalescing from a serious illness (during which there were periods of somnambulism) and was still somewhat nervously exhausted. At this time she collected the greatest number of dreams for her file. Later they became rare; when they did occur she noticed that it was when she was sleeping less well than usual. She says, "In my case, therefore, there seems to be a relation between nervous disturbance and precognitive (or clairvoyant) dreaming. It is as though when my nerves are at rest my dreaming mind is content to chew the cud of past happenings. When I am in a disturbed state, on the other hand, the dreaming mind has a tendency to peer around to see what is ahead."

A Classification of Spontaneous Cases in Terms of Motivation

We shall now give a seven-fold classification of spontaneous cases, in terms of the internal evidence as to their motivation, with typical examples of each. (We wish to thank Mr. W. H. Salter, Hon. Secretary of the Society for Psychical Research, London, for permission to quote from the *Journal* of that Society.)

(1) *Love—the need for contact*: The first case to be quoted under this heading is a remarkable precognitive dream of Samuel Clemens ("Mark Twain"). It is abridged from the report first appearing in the biography, *Mark Twain*, by Albert Bigelow Paine. The dream concerned the death of Mark Twain's brother, Henry Clemens, in the explosion of the steamship *Pennsylvania*. The famous humorist was said to be "lavishly fond and proud" of his young brother.

One night, when the *Pennsylvania* lay in St. Louis, he [Mark Twain] slept at his sister's house and had this vivid dream:

He saw Henry, a corpse, lying in a metallic burial case in the

sitting-room, supported on two chairs. On his breast lay a bouquet of flowers, white, with a single crimson bloom in the center.

When he awoke, it was morning, but the dream was so vivid that he believed it real. . . . He told Pamela the dream, then put it out of his mind as quickly as he could . . .

Then came the news, "The *Pennsylvania* is blown up just below Memphis, at Ship Island! One hundred and fifty lives lost!" . . . Many persons had been killed outright; many more had been scalded and crippled and would die. [Henry Clemens was among these.] It was one of those hopeless, wholesale steamboat slaughters which for more than a generation had made the Mississippi a river of death and tears.

. . . He saw the boy taken to the dead room; the coffins provided for the dead were of unpainted wood, but the youth and striking face of Henry Clemens had aroused a special interest. The ladies of Memphis had made up a fund of sixty dollars and bought him a metallic case. Samuel Clemens, entering, saw his brother lying exactly as he had seen him in his dream, lacking only the bouquet of white flowers with its crimson center—a detail made complete while he stood there, for at that moment an elderly lady came in with a large white bouquet and in the center of it was a single red rose.⁹

We have begun with a precognitive, rather than a telepathic case, which may serve to bring out the fact that the dynamics appear to be the same whether telepathy, clairvoyance, or precognition is involved. Our hypothesis would be that at the time of the dream nothing existing in the world meant so much to Mr. Clemens as his young brother, and that in all of time—past, present, or future—nothing was so important to him as his fate.

In the same category as the dream of Samuel Clemens, we may briefly discuss an experience of Miss Lilian Whiting's. It shows the same intensity of relationship between the persons concerned, but without the bond of blood-kinship. The content of the experience was purely emotional rather than sharply defined as in the dream above. Moreover, we are dealing with a waking rather than with a dream experience. Our purpose is to show that motiva-

⁹ The original account does not say how much time elapsed between the dream and the accident.

¹⁰ For a somewhat fuller account, see *Noted Witnesses for Psychic Occurrences*, by W. F. Prince, B.S.P.R., 1928.

tion is the key whether the experience be precognitive or telepathic, sleeping or waking, sharply defined as to content or otherwise. In discussing the case Dr. Prince¹¹ wrote: "Miss Whiting has had many psychical experiences, some of them of impressive evidential character. The one which follows should be considered on the background of Miss Whiting's specially intimate relations with Kate Field. . . . We learn that when a girl she adored Miss Field for her literary work, and afterwards had fifteen years of close friendship with her." Miss Whiting describes her experiences in connection with Miss Field's death in her own words:

The voyage had been an ideal one, full, to me, of a curious uplift of feeling that suddenly changed, the day we landed, to a sadness and desolation inexpressible, and for which no adequate cause could be even faintly conjectured. . . . This swift change of feeling from exhilaration of spirits to an unutterable desolation was initiated by an experience for which I can suggest no explanation; but the occurrence was one which leaves an impress that will forever stand as a crisis hour in life. It was this.

On our last night on shipboard we had enjoyed the usual merry time of the "Captain's dinner" with its gala and laughter, and had retired with the happy anticipations of landing at Liverpool in the early morning. I had been asleep for some hours when, suddenly, as if by an electric shock, I found myself standing on the floor of my stateroom with the quiver of a current of electricity pervading me from head to feet as if I grasped a strongly charged battery. . . . The words I had just heard—not with the outer ear, but with some inner sense—vibrated in the air. For I had seemed to see standing, I knew not where, three forms, which, by the same inexplicable inner sense, I knew were in the ethereal, not the natural, world; I seemed too, to know that one of these had but just entered that world, and I heard her say, in tones of mingled joy, amazement, incredulity, and triumph, "Is *this* all? It is all over!"

Then I said to myself: "Some one I know has just died, some one whose death will make the greatest difference to me." Yet, strangely, I did not think of *her*—in whose presence or absence the entire world always changed to me—she with whom I constantly lived in thought, whether we were together or whether half the world stretched its space between us. . . . On awakening in the

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

morning that dread desolation, unanalyzed and unaccountable, settled down over me.

. . . On that June day in Paris, I learned from a cablegram that she [Kate Field] had already been for more than two weeks in the life beyond (and) that her death had occurred the very day that I landed at Liverpool. . . .¹²

(2) *Self-protection*: In this category we intend to include those intimations (either dreams or waking impressions) of danger to self or to others—danger which is sometimes averted because of the impression. A straightforward example of an individual protected from death can be found in a case presented by Dr. Prince in our own JOURNAL. As a result of a series of vivid dreams, Thomas King refused to sail on a certain ship. The ship went to sea and the first night out broke to pieces in a storm. Everyone on board perished.¹³ Another case illustrating the same factor of self-protection, but with another factor included as well, is that of a medical practitioner who, by driving in a manner altogether alien to his usual habit, protected himself from a smash-up and made possible his effective ministering to persons who were injured. We quote this case nearly in full from the JOURNAL of the S.P.R.¹⁴

We have received the following narrative through the Countess of Balfour, to whom the circumstances were described by Mr. Eames, of whom she is a patient, within a fortnight of the occurrence. He afterwards very kindly wrote out this account, incorporating in it the answers to some questions we asked.

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF MR. E. G. EAMES.

On Saturday May 24th 1930, I was driving as usual from St. Albans to London, along a road I knew exceedingly well, for I had traversed it hundreds and hundreds of times. My car is a fast one, I drive fastly, for I am always in a hurry, and on this particular

¹² To summarize, Miss Field's death in Honolulu and Miss Whiting's experience on shipboard took place on May 19, 1896. For a full account of this and subsequent experiences, see *After Her Death* (Boston, 1901) by Lillian Whiting.

¹³ JOURNAL A.S.P.R., Vol. XVI, 1922, pp. 172-174.

¹⁴ JOURNAL S.P.R., Vol. XXVI, October, 1930, pp. 117-118.

morning I had some five operations to perform in London before lunch.

But a preceding car had for long prevented me from accelerating to a really quick speed. It was a Jowett car, being driven carefully and quietly by a typical family man, in a typically leisurely manner . . . In the ordinary way I should have passed by, as I pass by hundreds of similar tourists and forgotten them—miles back. But on this occasion I absolutely could not pass. It was not the car that prevented me. On the contrary it would have been easy to have got by, and I wanted to get by, but something, some exceedingly strong something, insinuated into my subconscious brain that an accident was going to occur . . . It was in no ways concerned with the driving of the man in front. Actually he was driving very well. It certainly wasn't nerves, it was a very real presentiment that a crash was going to occur and a warning not to approach too near. For five miles then I hesitated behind this slow-going old car, blaming my foolishness, but very much aware all the time of a holding back. Soon, however, I was to be very grateful indeed for this intimation for when we reached a point in the Watling St., between Radlett and St. Albans the looked for accident occurred.

A lorry preceded the Jowett which was immediately in front of me. The three of us slowly making our ways to London. On the opposite side of the road, a large saloon car had stopped. Suddenly the door of the stationary car opened, the huge lorry, obliterating the entire view of the road could not quite get by. Without warning he stopped abruptly. The poor little Jowett went on. Turned out, found his road completely blocked in every direction, braked violently, skidded and crashed first into the back of the lorry and then onto a brick wall. And for five miles I had known very distinctly that it was going to happen. So very much so that during that time I had felt very inclined to go up and mention my presentiment to the driver of the little family car.

All that remains to say is that being immediately behind I must in the ordinary way have been smashed up too, but had kept just far enough back to be able to come to a standstill immediately beside the wrecked car. I attended to the little child, who was badly cut, and rushed both he and his mother . . . to the hospital . . . This is the third time in my life that I have felt these strong compelling forces or influences warning me of danger, and always I have been afterwards very deeply grateful that I have been fore-warned.

(3) *Ego, including guilt feelings, need for self-justification, etc.*: We find it worthwhile to make a distinction

between *self-protection* in the simple physical sense, and *self-justification*; that is, the maintenance of one's self-respect and the guarding of one's favorable picture of oneself. These latter we may broadly call the ego-motives. Here we may refer briefly to another medical example, that of a doctor who, while cruising near the West Indies, had a vivid impression that one of his patients in England needed him. On returning home the percipient learned that this patient had in fact called at his office at about the time of his impression.¹⁵ Undoubtedly, however, a fusion of many motives may have been involved here, including professional concern for the welfare of the patient, etc. Or we might refer to the very complicated case of the resident of a town near Washington who dreams that he is to become secretary to a congressman, a form of professional advancement of which at the time he had no intimation.¹⁶ Here also should be included Mrs. Dale's dream of the vacuum cleaner, which was reported in a recent issue of this JOURNAL.¹⁷ The dream appears to have been produced in a struggle to achieve a paranormal result after failure in an experiment the day before, but with the additional motive of love for her little dog entering into the picture in a manner reminiscent of some of Miss Bishop's impressions. Like Mrs. Dale, Mrs. Kenneth Richmond in England seems to have had a precognitive dream to "please" somebody specially interested in such dreams. We quote her original account nearly in full, together with her interesting observations on motivation:¹⁸

On 27 September 1933 I listened with great interest to Mrs. Lyttelton's Presidential Address, in which she dwelt specially on precognition and asked members to put on record any precognitive dreams that they might have. That night I had the only precognitive dream that has registered itself in my conscious memory.

In this dream I saw four charabancs, all alike, filled with foreign students visiting London. These students were all wearing black

¹⁵ *Journal S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXI, March, 1939, pp. 34-37.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXI, April, 1939, pp. 47-53.

¹⁷ *JOURNAL A.S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXVII, April, 1943, pp. 95-101.

¹⁸ *Journal S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXI, June, 1939, pp. 83-85.

astrakhan caps. The dream struck me as so curious and senseless that I mentioned it to my husband on waking. On the same morning I took an unusual route to my office . . . in order to change some foreign money for a child who was staying with us. . . As I was about to enter the bureau, four charabancs passed, filled with people all wearing black berets. Large labels on the windscreens announced that the party belonged to a foreign student organization. The sight of them gave me a distinctly uncomfortable sensation, a sense of strangeness at the close resemblance of the scene to the one of which I had dreamt.

The dream showed no labels on the windscreens, but the information conveyed by these labels appears to have been represented by the dream-impression that the occupants of the charabancs were foreign students. The only complete discrepancy was the appearance of black astrakhan caps in the dream and black berets in the reality . . .

I have generally found that any psychical experiences that I have had were in response to some need that could be traced, either my own or another's. In this case, it seems that the need was that impressed upon my mind by Mrs. Lyttelton in her Presidential Address, for more recorded cases of precognitive dreaming. As I have noted, the dream appeared at first sight to be particularly senseless, and was put on record for that reason.

Guilt-feelings may be important from the point of view of motivation in paranormal experiences coinciding with death or disaster, as in the case of the man who, when his neighbor committed suicide, heard footsteps and then a "most appalling shriek—a prolonged wail of horror."¹⁹ The unfortunate young man had begged the percipient to spend the evening with him and the latter had refused, pleading a prior engagement which he in fact did not have. The percipient's wife, sitting nearby, heard nothing. It is not difficult to see that the tragedy might have been *figure* for the percipient, *ground* for his wife.

Finally, the ego cases should include simple self-gratification, or gratification of vanity, as in a striking case in which the well-known sensitive, Mrs. Warren Elliott, was the percipient. This case has the additional merit of showing the role that humor may have played as a secondary

¹⁹ *Phantasms of the Living*, Vol. I, pp. 222-225.

motivation. (Whether the communicator was in this instance an independent entity or a part of Mrs. Elliott's own psychology need not be discussed here.) The case is summarized from the *Journal of the S.P.R.*²⁰

One morning Mrs. Elliott received a letter from one of her regular sitters, a Mrs. Hammond (pseudonym), saying that she was sending her a birthday gift from Selfridge's and that she thought Mrs. Elliott would be "amused" at the contents of the package. Later on in the morning, while reading another letter, Mrs. Elliott became aware of the presence of Mr. Hammond (the deceased husband of her sitter), who said, "They are nightdresses Mrs. Hammond is sending you." He then showed Mrs. Elliott a white one "and there are two other shades," he said. Mrs. Elliott thereupon called up Mrs. Hammond, who confirmed that the gift package, which arrived several hours later, contained three nightgowns. One was white and the other two were of different shades. [The incident is well corroborated and normal explanations seem unlikely.]

(4) *Money, or other material gain*: In this category we wish to discuss the motive of material gain, specifically the money motive. Though we are aware that from the psychoanalytic point of view money as such is not a truly basic interest, we must at least recognize that the paranormal cases exhibiting the money factor are numerous. First we quote from the *Journal of the S.P.R.* a case which apparently arose from a man's concern with his failure to receive money which was rightfully his. In February, 1938, the percipient, Mr. E. J. Harris, wrote as follows:²¹

. . . Some few years ago [Mr. Harris states that the dream first occurred in 1925 or 1926] I was constantly having a recurrent dream. In this dream, I went to my mother's old desk and took from a spring drawer, which I knew of, a sum of money which I counted, and then put back. Gradually the amount increased, until on my last dream visit it amounted to sixty pounds . . . Recently [October, 1937] my sister, whom I had not seen for some time, came to visit us, and I repeated the story of my dream to her . . . the following day she told my wife and myself that she had passed a sleepless night, and felt constrained to tell us that just before my mother

²⁰ *Journal S.P.R.*, Vol. XXVI, October, 1929, pp. 143-145.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXX, April, 1938, pp. 197-198.

died, she told my sister that she had saved a sum of money to be given to me, which was then in the Post Office. She signed an authorization for my sister to get the money, and shortly after passed away. When my sister drew this money from the Post Office, she found it was exactly sixty pounds. As I was at that time in receipt of a good income, my sister kept the matter to herself, and used the money to help pay for a trip . . . [Corroboratory statements from the percipient's wife, sister, and son are appended. It is to be noted that Mr. Harris' mother died nearly 20 years before the first occurrence of his dream.]

We may also quote the striking case of an hallucination experienced in the gaming-rooms at Monte Carlo, as a result of which the percipient won a sum of money. We summarize from the original report appearing in the *Journal of the S.P.R.*:²²

Mr. and Mrs. Boustead had been playing roulette at Monte Carlo. As they had not been winning, they decided to return to their hotel for tea. Passing through one of the game rooms, Mr. Boustead happened to glance at a roulette table where, to his surprise, he saw two balls in the wheel. He went closer to see what was the matter, and immediately realized that one ball was real while the other, though exactly like the real one, was blurred and would not come into focus. The "phantom" ball was lying either in number 34 or number 6 (these numbers are next to each other on a roulette wheel); as the wheel was still moving he could not be certain which, although he felt it was number 34. After Mr. Boustead had stared at the ball for at least five seconds it suddenly vanished. He thereupon walked over to his wife, who was standing about ten yards away, and told her what he had seen. He then went back to the gaming table and placed some money on both number 34 and number 6. At the next spin of the wheel the real ball fell into number 34 and Mr. Boustead won.

Finally, in this category should be included an even more striking example, a presentiment relating to the winner of the Derby, which came not to a professional devotee of the race-track, but to an elderly Quaker who was strongly opposed to betting and who had been, in fact, an officer in an anti-betting society!²³ As Miss Bishop pointed out,

²² *Journal S.P.R.*, Vol. XXIII, June, 1925, pp. 88-91.
²³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVIII, April, 1934, pp. 216-218.

we have here an example of the operation of unconscious motivation. It is not to a person who is indifferent, simply bored with betting, that this experience comes; it is to a person who has taken a determined position *against* it, a fact which suggests the operation of unconscious motives, perhaps wishes and needs which have been effectively repressed by activity in a contrary direction.

(5) *Curiosity*: By "curiosity" we mean the active desire to follow up clues and to resolve an incomplete picture of a situation; and we shall have to make the category broad enough to include so-called "maudlin curiosity" and that whole group of motives which impel certain individuals to read horror stories and, whether in war or peace, the more gruesome details of human suffering and catastrophe. Much of the content of gossip is of the "isn't it terrible?" variety, and publicists and dramatists alike have always known that people "want" or "need" a certain amount of the horrible and the sensational. Sheer idle curiosity is probably of some significance in itself, but it appears to be the kind of curiosity that feeds on "murder stories" which figures most prominently in the cases which have come under our present survey. We are not referring, of course, to cases of catastrophe to one's own loved ones, which are included in the first category; we refer rather to cases of sheer avid curiosity in relation to unknown persons.

A striking example of an experience coming within this fifth category is Dr. Prince's own precognitive dream relating to a woman's head severed from its body, the jaws of which opened and closed upon his *hand*, filling him with horror at the thought of a head which still lived apart from its body. This dream coincided closely with the decapitation of a Mrs. Hand, among whose effects was found an insane letter indicating that her head would continue to live after it had been severed from her body.²⁴ Many of J. W. Dunne's precognitive dreams appear to be dreams of catastrophe to

²⁴ *JOURNAL A.S.P.R.*, Vol. XVII, 1923, pp. 89-101.

persons unknown to him, such as his dream of the Mont Pelee volcano disaster, in which thousands of persons lost their lives, and a later dream concerning a terrible fire in a French rubber factory, where many working girls were suffocated by the fumes of the burning rubber.²⁵ The criterion by which the sleeping mind seeks *something exciting* with which to make contact seems to be much the same as the criterion of a tabloid journalist: "Find something exciting and preferably something terrible." It should be mentioned that a secondary ego factor may be involved when it concerns investigators in our field, such as Dr. Prince and Mr. Dunne, who in a sense want cases because they enhance the percipients as not only investigating the experiences of others but also having genuine experiences of their own.

(6) *Agent's need to make contact*: Up to this point, we have primarily concerned ourselves with motivation from the point of view of the percipient, and have said nothing about the motives of the agent. Sometimes, however, we have clear facts regarding the agent's motives, as when, in semi-experimental cases, a person successfully projects an image of himself to an unsuspecting percipient. (See *Phantasms of the Living*, Vol. I, pp. 104 ff.) Indeed, in many reported cases of a different type, agency would seem to involve a "self-expression" motive—the desire or need on the part of the agent to enhance or justify or explain himself. And we must, I think, likewise note the great frequency of cases in which there is strong evidence for the active love of the agent for the percipient. Thus in our sixth category we may refer the readers to another S.P.R. case in which a woman in Scotland is awakened from sound sleep by feeling someone press a kiss on her forehead. Looking up, she sees an Austrian friend of hers standing by her bed. "She looked as though she desired to say something . . . but I was so startled, not to say, afraid,

²⁵ *An Experiment with Time*, New York, Macmillan, 1927, pp. 34-37 and 39-40.

I was speechless . . . Her expression was so sad and enquiring I cannot forget it."²⁶ The percipient's friend had died in Vienna at about the time of the experience. The most striking aspect of this case is the pathetic need of the phantasm to make itself understood. It seemed to want to convey something which it could not express. No compelling activity or need on the part of the percipient, who was "awfully frightened," is evident. This case can be compared with another "phantasm" case, in which the percipient looks up from her book to see her husband standing by the foot of her bed. After gazing at the apparition for a few seconds, she unconcernedly put out the light and went to sleep. She stated that she "was neither alarmed nor excited nor even particularly interested."²⁷ Her husband had died twenty-four hours before. We always have, I suppose, some degree of activity on the part of the percipient, but it is the compelling motivation of the agent which stands out as the primary clue in cases like these.

Especially striking is a case reported in full in the *Journal of the S.P.R.*, in which a group of percipients do indeed have a need to receive a message, but in which the longing of the agent is demonstrably the major clue to the content of the message received. Indeed, the boy's longing was so intense that he seems to have "forced his way," uninvited, into the midst of the group of percipients. The case does not easily lend itself to abridgment, and, again, readers are urged to refer to original material; the summary below, however, may give an idea of the salient points involved:²⁸

A spiritualistic circle of six persons at Flushing, Holland, met on the evening of July 23rd, 1922. Of these persons, two had once known English, but had not kept it up; the remaining four were unacquainted with English. By use of a simple wooden device held over the letters of the alphabet, messages were spelt out. On the

²⁶ *Journal S.P.R.*, Vol. XXV-XXVI, Nov., 1930, pp. 133-135.

²⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. XXII-XXIII, July, 1925, pp. 98-104.

²⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. XXI, Dec., 1923, pp. 170-175.

evening in question, a "communicator" appeared, stated that he was an Englishman, and indicated that he would write a song for them, see 1a below:

1a THE SUN HAS SET
AND NOW A NEW
WITH FALL END EW
THE GRASS IS WET
FLYST PART
each little bird
Has sunk to rest
within its nest
O Song is heard

Evening Song

1b The sun has set,
And now a new
With fallen dew
The grass is wet.
And little bird
is sing to rest
Within his nest.
No song is heard.

Evening Song

1c The sun has set,
and now anew
With fallen dew
The grass is wet.
Each little bird
Has sunk to rest
Within its nest
No song is heard.

Now, a fifteen year old boy lived opposite to the house where the séance took place; he longed to attend one of these mysterious meetings, but was not allowed to. On the evening of July 23rd, he watched the persons entering the house across the way, then, bored and vexed at not being invited, he got out an old school-book which contained the stanzas of an English poem he had once learned at school (see 1c above). He drowsed over this poem for about a half hour, during which time the sitting across the street was continuing. On the following day one of the sitters learned what the boy had been doing, and asked him to type out from memory the poem he had been reading. The boy's version is found in 1b above.

(7) *Motive strong from point of view of both agent and percipient*: Finally, we have to deal with a number of cases in which motives seem quite clear both on behalf of the agent and on behalf of the percipient, but which do not easily fit into our first category. These may be divided into two sub-categories: (a) Those cases in which the agent is still alive or at the point of death (cases which Gurney, Myers, and Podmore called "Phantasms of the Living") and (b) cases in which we must say that the agent is unknown unless it be in fact a deceased person; that is, cases in which the impression, taken at its face value, would indicate survival and post-mortem agency.

Under the first subheading we might include a case collected by Dr. Prince,²⁹ in which a missionary sees the apparition of his wife, from whom he had been separated for ten years, on the night of her death. The phantasm

seemed to want to indicate that their marital difficulties had been her fault. Then there is the striking case of the "dollar bills," fully reported by the S.P.R.³⁰ Here a young Roman Catholic woman fell into a swoon upon hearing of her father's sudden death while away from home. On recovering consciousness, she stated that he had appeared to her and told her that some money had been sewn inside the shirt he was wearing when he died. When his clothes were finally recovered, 35 one-dollar bills were found sewed in the pocket of the shirt, as described in detail by the percipient. In this case, although the apparent agent had been dead for about twenty-four hours at the time of the percipient's experience, the hypothesis of "latency" might still be held to apply. This hypothesis, however, can hardly be invoked in regard to the "Chaffin Will" case,³¹ where the ostensible agent had been dead for four years. This leads us to our second subheading, and two cases, both from the S.P.R., are quoted at some length to illustrate the type. The first of these is essentially spontaneous; the second involves the mediumship of Mrs. Leonard. But in each of the cases the motives, I think, are quite clear from the point of view of both percipient and agent. (In the mediumistic case we must regard the sitter as the "percipient.") The incident of the "damaged cross" is summarized from the fully corroborated report appearing in the *Journal of the S.P.R.* In March, 1930, the percipient, Mrs. Sparkes, wrote in part as follows:³²

"My late husband died in May 1929 . . . I ordered a firm of Monumental Masons to erect a Cross over the grave. They wrote last January that this had been done, and sent their bill. My custom is to pay all bills at once. My impulse was, accordingly, to, then and there, send a cheque. A communicator purporting to be my late husband has been in the habit of sending me messages since his death. I scribble them down on bits of paper or in a note-book. While I contemplated sending the cheque—I was holding a pencil not waiting for any message or thinking of anything in particular, when

³⁰ *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. VIII (1892), pp. 200-205.

³¹ *Ibid*, Vol. XXXVI (1926-27), pp. 517-524.

³² *Journal S.P.R.*, Vol. XXVI, June, 1930, pp. 93-95.

²⁹ Prince, W. F., *Human Experiences*, B.S.P.R., 1931, pp. 145-146.

it wrote: 'See to my grave at Shamley Green. I see a crack at the base of the right side of the cross . . . on the right side standing on the path. Do not go on with the payment until it is attended to, or it will not be done.' . . . On at last seeing the monument I found a gash three inches long, one inch wide, and one inch deep on the lowest block on the right hand side facing the path."

Miss Newton interviewed Mrs. Sparkes and ascertained that she had had no news of the progress of the stone between ordering it and hearing that it was completed. Mrs. Sparkes also stated that she never went to cemeteries as she disliked them. Two independent witnesses confirmed "that on the right side of the stone, facing it from the path, there is a defect in the granite . . . filled up with cement . . . from the outline of this defect it has the appearance of a tool mark rather than a crack."

Our final episode, considerably abridged, is taken from Mrs. Salter's paper, "A Report on Some Recent Sittings with Mrs. Leonard."³³ The sitter was Mrs. Dawson-Smith and the communicator purported to be her son who was killed in January, 1920.

EXTRACT FROM SITTING WITH MRS. LEONARD, JANUARY 10, 1921

Feda [Mrs. Leonard's control]: And he says, "Have you got my little key? You were touching it the other day. As you moved about, you touched the key. And there was an old purse with a receipt in it, a tiny paper. It feels old. I wish you could find it, old, worn and soiled, mixed up with a lot of other things." He doesn't think you have it. Do find it. He calls it a counterfoil. Try and unearth it. He will be so interested. He knows you have it, a long narrow strap close to it. "I noticed that accidentally." He says this is important.

In November, 1924, Mrs. Dawson-Smith wrote to Sir Oliver Lodge as follows:

"I think you will be interested to hear of another fulfilled prophecy. [Mrs. Dawson-Smith quotes from above extract.] I hunted for this paper, and over a big trunk in our box-room I noticed a long strap hanging. I opened the box and hunted through the contents and came across a worn old leather purse, and in it a worn old counterfoil of a money order. I carefully took it out and put it in my desk, thinking the importance might be found later. And true! The following explains:

"I had a letter from the 'Enemy Debt Clearing Office' demanding

³³ *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXVI (1926-27), pp. 187-332. The episode of the "missing counterfoil" is on pp. 303 ff.

a sum of money said to be owing to a Hamburg firm, which was incurred in July, 1914—before the war. I *knew* my boy had paid it . . . so I wrote to the Controller and explained that the account had been paid ten years ago. Then the Hamburg people said they had not received it, and if I had no proof other than my memory, it would be pressed (the claim). Then I remembered my boy's message at Mrs. Leonard's and I hastened to look at the counterfoil and found it the identical paper needed to prove the account had been paid. Needless to say I sent a complete account of the transaction to the Controller, and he of course verified it in every particular, and wrote to apologise for having caused me so much worry and trouble, and to say no further action would be taken in the matter . . ." [The existence of the counterfoil and the correspondence with the Enemy Debt Clearing Office was verified by Mrs. Sidgwick and Sir Oliver Lodge.]

Motivation in Experimental Cases

The reader may at this point inquire as to our reason for emphasizing spontaneous cases rather than experimental cases. The chief reason has been the richness of our evidence regarding motives in the spontaneous material. With the experimental material we know very little about motives except that the subject is trying, at least consciously, to make high scores. We do, however, have some clues which indicate that the motives operating in the experimental cases are similar to those in the spontaneous cases. The brilliant subject, Mr. C. J., used by Martin and Stribic³⁴ assimilated his experimental experiences to his previous spontaneous experiences. He not only wanted to do well in the experiments; he was, as it were, recapitulating the spontaneous experiences which had meant so much to him. The desire to please a loved one is clearly important, as shown in experimental cases where engaged couples have successfully acted as agent and percipient.³⁵ Self-justification seems to have played a role when the experimenter has defied the subject to do well and he has accepted the chal-

³⁴ Martin, Dorothy, and Stribic, Frances, "Studies in Extra-Sensory Perception: III. A Review of all University of Colorado Experiments," *Journal of Parapsychology*, Vol. IV, 1940, cf. especially p. 173.

³⁵ Rhine, J. B., *New Frontiers of the Mind*, New York, Farrar and Rinehart, 1937, pp. 104 and 164-165.

lenge,³⁶ while resistance or antagonism to the experimenter has, in several instances, been clearly related to a significant drop in scoring level, or even to below-chance scoring.³⁷

We are willing to hazard the conjecture that the principal motives operative in paranormal impressions appear in such strength that we select and organize paranormal impressions with a very vigorous autistic determination; and we must suspect that over and above the *general* needs of human beings, it will be found that *individual* needs are correlated with individual variations in paranormal perception. The time has come for intensive personality studies to provide clues to the inner dynamics of paranormal experience.

Barriers to the Paranormal

All this may well seem to make the whole problem too easy. If motives fulfill themselves so simply, why does not paranormal perception occur continuously? Perhaps, as Professor H. H. Price once pointed out, the question is not, *Why* do we perceive paranormally, but rather, *Why* do we not perceive paranormally *all the time*? But the fact is that we live predominantly in the immediate world of time and space and that we inhibit or block our paranormal tendencies. It seems as though we were inclined not only to be afraid of such impressions, but also to feel that they are "queer" and "unnatural." The matter-of-fact civilization of which we are a part intensifies our tendency to rely on our sense organs and to mistrust everything else; consciously or unconsciously, we shut the paranormal out.

The main clue we need, then, is the clue which will point to the way in which the customary blockage or barrier may be penetrated or removed. We are sufficiently motivated, apparently, to make paranormal contact. The problem is to learn how and why we manage so successfully to block

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-96.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

ourselves, and thus how to remove the barriers. The term "blockage" or "barrier" refers to one of the mechanisms which in psychology is conceived to predispose to dissociation. One side of the shield is *motivation*—that which impels us to make paranormal contact—and as far as we can see there is no mystery here; the motives are those with which we are already familiar. The other side of the shield is the process by which we *prevent* ourselves from fulfilling motives through paranormal perception. It is therefore with this aspect of the problem that we shall come to terms in the next article.