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The Natural, the Mystical, and the Paranormal*

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The Second John William Graham Lecture on Psychic Science†

Man's craving for contact with his fellows can in part be satisfied by membership in a crowd; better, by a circle of casual acquaintances; better still, by deep love and communion with those who are so closely

* The present study of the interdependence of human beings is a continuation of a theme developed by Mrs. Henry Sidgwick (*Proceedings S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXIII, 1923, pp. 419 ff.), and by myself in three papers dealing with the subject of survival (*JOURNAL A.S.P.R.*, 1945). While I cannot here recapitulate the substance of the earlier thought, I would note that the view to which I was earlier drawn by the evidence was to the effect that personality is not a self-contained unit or capsule capable of separation from other personalities; and consequently that survival study is a study of the persistence of personal interrelationships rather than only of self-sufficient individualities. The present lecture is concerned simply with the role of love in developing and maintaining such personal interrelationships.

† This lecture was delivered at Swarthmore College on April 27, 1952.

held to the heart that they are like parts of oneself. Contact, friendship, love, these are the daily satisfiers of our deep and continuous craving for some sort of oneness with others. These cravings and these satisfactions are so much a part of ourselves that we embrace them as a part of Nature, and indeed of what we call "human nature"; and those who lack the experience are held to be unnatural.

Yet at times there may be no one to love, or those whom we love may be separated in space, or estranged, or lost in reveries in which they have no need of us; or, most strangely, as in the case of the Lord Buddha, those who mean the most to us are somehow felt to be insufficient to fulfill our insatiable craving for comradeship and intimacy. In Yosemite Valley at night Bayard Taylor (27) heard a choir invisible break into exalted song. We may experience in these moments the presence of an invisible comforter, whether a fragment of this eternal harmony of the spheres or something felt to be a personal embodiment of the divine; and the observers who look upon the outward shell of our existence and do not hear the inner experience will call us mystics. Whether there is really a basic cleavage between that which is called natural and that which is called mystical I do not pretend to know; but I would suggest that from a purely psychological viewpoint the mystical serves the same deep need as our natural contact with our fellows through love.

But there is a third group of experiences which may satisfy the craving for contact. These experiences are called psychical; or nowadays, to mark the fact that they are not well understood in terms of general psychology, they are tending to be called paranormal. They involve contacts by means which we do not understand, but usually serving the same basic need for communication with others. A voyager at sea, lonely for his wife, in a dream feels her enter the stateroom; and his cabin-mate, while wide awake, sees her in the form of a well-defined apparition; at that same time she had wandered to her husband in a dream, and on awakening recalled many of the details, later verified, of the room in which he lay (17). This third class of experiences, well known to all the human family, has only recently been studied with any systematic care. But that which is subjected to careful study has a tendency to become naturalized; and the view to which we shall find ourselves drawn is that the paranormal has its own order and rationality, and often embodies just as definite a response to the human need for communication as does the exchange of affection or the realization of mystical communion. Our problem in this hour will be the interrelation of these three classes of experiences: the natural, the mystical, and the paranormal. But since the paranormal is less well known to us than the natural and the mystical, and since it is in need of clarification, I shall give it special attention.

I.

We begin with contact through love. Is it possible to say anything new about the place of love in nature? We shall use the term to include everything in human experience to which the word is applied, from the most primitive infantile cuddling and nosing to the love of Cornelia for her sons or the love of Tristan and Isolde; and its expression in everything from Plato's Symposium and the reechoing magnificence of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians to Thornton Wilder's love as the meaning of life and Freud's all-comprehensive theory of the libido. We shall include in the term that which is shared by all these expressions of the need for warmth, contact, and communion; and indeed all that is specific to each of these as well, so that we shall deliberately draw into our net a gamut of experiences held together by a single central theme.

This definition of love will show the direction of our intent. We shall make no sharp distinction between the natural and the more-than-natural, between the physical and the spiritual, because in the texture of these experiences we seem to find that the sublimest of the spiritual realities is rooted in, and is expressed through, the tissues of the body, and the primal processes of growth, reproduction, and maternal care of the young are saturated with a quality of utter self-realization which seems to be indistinguishable, except in degree of complexity, from the religious experiences which are felt to bring to us our fullest realization of cosmic meaning. In the spirit of William James' discussion of "Religion and Neurology" (13), we shall not feel that the value or ultimate meaning of any experience is threatened or debased merely because its roots on the earthy soil of our existence as living flesh are made manifest; and in the spirit of Lotze we shall urge that the objective efforts of science towards ever fuller understanding and inspection of the picture of nature must be rigorously pursued to the uttermost limit, with never an experience held out from the accounting, immune to the searcher's peering eyes. At the same time, however, we deny the validity of the method of reduction; we deny that anything can ever be reduced to something other than itself. We deny that the existence of the living tissues is in any ultimate sense the *explanation* of the functions which they serve; there is on the contrary evidence that functions which fit in with the general structure of the world become incarnated in flesh which is moulded in their form. Thus organs are slowly evolved which take advantage of the light, which is there before life appears, so that the possibility of *seeing* logically precedes the origin of eyes; and in the same way love precedes logically the development of gregarious or sexual or maternal responses. We shall then be naturalistic in the sense of

James Ward's naturalism, but with emphasis upon its functions, not upon the structures in which life is expressed.

We may conveniently distinguish various forms of love that bring human beings together. First, following the long series of investigations of Professor Allee (1) at the University of Chicago, we shall stress the roots of fellow feeling and mutual support, which hold together the members of a species. These impulses to close association and support may first appear in such lowly responses as the physical crowding which keeps individuals warm and in some cases guards against danger. It includes however a sensitization to the sounds and sights of other members of one's kind. During the first year of our human life, it flows into both imitativeness and that "primitive sympathy" which appears in crying when others cry, laughing when they laugh. In the second and third years it expresses itself in anxiety at the distress of others and the impulse to help and restore (16).

A large part, at least, of this process depends upon the dynamic interaction between perception of oneself and perception of another person, and the ensuing process of identification of oneself with others. The more complex processes of identification appear then to be expressions of the primitive need or impulse towards contact.

The same rich background for the need for human contact relates, I think, with equal clarity to the observations of psychoanalysis. The infant pours out its diffuse and manifold affections upon the world of father and mother, brothers and sisters, pets, dolls, and its own body. It wants to touch and hold, and it wants to be touched and held. Because later these forms of outgoing response appear more and more fully realized in the mature love between the sexes, the Freudian way of thinking is to define even the earliest manifestations in terms of this later objective towards which they seem to be moving, so that the Freudian term "pregenital sexuality" is applied to many of the diffuse outgoing responses of the little child. We shall not quarrel with this approach, since it is clear that erotic feelings may appear very early in association with these impulses towards contact; but I would venture again to call attention to the fact that logically and chronologically the diffuse and the general tend to precede the definite and the specific; indeed the vague need for our fellows and the outgoing response to them which Allee defines may overlap greatly with the need which we are now considering for early diffuse contact with the mother. We need her for her breast, for her warmth, for her protection, for her ministrations; but we also need her for her words, for her songs, for the sight of her form nearby as we fall asleep, for the whole web of associations to which the term mother applies. She is the amalgam, the fusion of all these gratifications; or rather, from the

little child's viewpoint she is the undifferentiated good in which all these things inhere, and only later can the separate facets of her precious meaning be disassociated.

Along with the need for endearment is the impulse to bestow endearments. The sexual and the maternal are realizations in the concrete of many massive forces of feeling and of impulse which have recently yielded to physiological, to biochemical, and to embryological analysis. They can be named just as well from their initial phases as from their terminal phases, and just as well from that which they have in common as from that which differentiates them. Indeed, a narrowing of that which is typically somewhat diffuse in our human feeling betokens incomplete humanness, and a mother whose only interest in a child is in its capacity to drain the breast is regarded as incompletely a mother. Similarly, the love poetry and love music of the world suggest the unlimited richness of the erotic motive when the esthetic appeals of all the senses are included and blended with the elementary instinctual responses. It is not the reproductive urge which by itself makes the grand passion; the galaxy of feeling described by the *Song of Solomon* and the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* includes in its richness a large part of human nature.

This composite character of vital human experiences is one of the reasons why the derivation of most of the rich sentiments from the role of the maternal in the manner of Robert Briffault (3), and the development of them all from the role of the sexual in the manner of Freud (10), seems to us to becloud the issue, for one derives from the interest in the maternal or the sexual what has been put into the amalgam in the first place, the components being naturally enriched by their blending.

Since we regard the comradely, the maternal, and the sexual as composites containing many ingredients, there is necessarily a considerable overlap not only between the different kinds of feeling, but between these and the feelings towards oneself which we popularly call self-love, and which the psychoanalysts, thinking of the myth of Narcissus, call narcissism. Some of the components of response to the contours of one's own face and body, the melodic line of one's voice, are responded to in the first year. There is constant association of the body image with the inner vital satisfactions when our deep needs are met. Self-love, like the other forms of love, is a composite, and it shares with other forms of love several of the deep satisfactions which it affords.

Now insofar as we identify with others, we find ourselves realized in them, and them in ourselves, so that self-fulfillment comes with the love of others and vice versa. The tradition of the East as well as of the West has often mistakenly insisted on the mutilation of self-love,

in the supposed interest of the love of others; and the price, in the form of damage both to personal adequacy and to full social participation, has often been great. From the present viewpoint all love is in itself satisfying, fulfilling, and therefore good, and tends to overlap or fuse with all other kinds of love. The only practical limit lies in those types of infatuation which become possessive and exclusive, tying the lover to a single object or person in so abject a fashion that flexibility and freedom for the love of other persons is blocked. At the other extreme we think of the prophet who, as he came out from the wilderness, loved all men with so deep a passion that none, no matter how base or contemptible, could escape the solvent power of his devotion. Possessive infatuation and prophetic love would thus be the extremes in the range of human capacity for loving.

In summary thus far, we have attempted to show that the vital needs essential to the life of our bodies and to gratification which our senses afford us provide the raw materials for the world of love; that these many needs which are at first diffuse become organized through growth and learning into the various clusters of feeling and impulse which have been given such designations as the gregarious, the comradely, the maternal, the sexual, the narcissistic, the possessive, and the prophetic.

II

We turn to the form of love and communion which is called mystical. It embraces at times a heightened sense of contact with a personal being not evident to the senses,* a person sensed as divine. At times the reality to which the mystic refers is, however, impersonal or superpersonal; it is the One, the Cosmos, that which changes not. At times, as if in an effort to combine the personal with the superpersonal, the entity with which communion is felt is a deep and changeless portion of oneself, or a deep and changeless selfhood in the cosmos, or that which is at the same time oneself and the eternal self. The cultivation of states of mind and body which permit the full realization of this ultimate oneness of self and cosmic self, with an utter loss of the sense of individuality, may be the passionate preoccupation of the novice who under his teacher gladly gives the best years of his life to discipline and study and exercise that he may achieve the unutterable bliss of selflessness, serenity, and transcendent peace.

In these and in all other forms of mystical isolation from the outer world, the first impression is one of retreat. Escape from a threatening

* Note the extraordinary way in which we strive both to affirm and to deny the role of our senses in all such commerce with the world which we cannot touch.

world we can understand, if the aim is simply escape. But when the mystic tells us that he gains infinitely more than he gives up, when he insists, in the very language of the poetry of love, that the realization of his yearning is far richer and deeper than the deepest satisfactions of this world, we are forced to try to explain how a substitute can be infinitely more fulfilling than the thing which it replaces. Dr. Maurice Bucke, whose book *Cosmic Consciousness* (6) endeavored to show the essential affinity between prophetic love, creative experience, and unutterable revelation, succeeded for a moment, riding in a cab, in achieving this sense of the all, and the rest of his life was an effort to capture and to understand it.

Now just as the world of natural love and communication has nothing to fear by being studied, and just as we believe that the use of critical observation and analysis may bring into a unity that which at first seemed fractionated and irreconcilable, so here in the realm of the mystical we may take courage to affirm the place of rigorous and systematic inquiry, with no fear that that which is naturalized will fall into dust and lose meaning. We find today the French physician Dr. Thérèse Brosse (4) studying the physiology of the yogic trance; we find the professional psychologists K. T. Behanan (2) and Kali Prasad (18) seeking to unify the psychology of yoga with the psychology of the West. Another physician of today, who for the present prefers to remain nameless, tells how, on the basis of experience with drugs he has broken through and transcended all the petty limitations of our daily consciousness, and has become, in the intensity and overwhelming bliss of his experience, one with the great seers. In his experience, as in that of the men and women described by Bucke and by William James, the drawing down of the curtain of the senses, the abandonment of the world which we know, leads into a fairland of incredible power and fascination. It appears probable, as these studies take shape, that in certain physiological states there is a heightening both of the functions of the vital organs and of the sensory and imaginative powers.

But let us not, like Pandora, shut the box before the last voice has been heard. The first voices of these modern researches might make us think that physiological tension gives an ultimate explanation of the experience of the mystic. When the evidence is all before us, however, we may find that the physiological tensions are themselves the vehicles of the basic need of the individual for communion with forces both personal and impersonal which are beyond himself, and that it is the craving of that which is incomplete to become complete which activates the struggle. Viewed in broad perspective, man is the kind of being who when by himself becomes lonely, incomplete, inadequate even to exist. In the shock of his loneliness or isolation he may crave ultimate

union both with that which is personal and with that which is superpersonal in the world. I do not pretend to know whether the entities with which he makes contact are entities which have existence independent of himself; but I do wish to emphasize that many a prophet, realizing such contacts and full of their brightness, has loved and served his fellow men in the light of their blessing.

III

We come now to the paranormal. What manner of facts are to be found in this strange domain? In all science one begins, of course, with what Nature gives us, and then one tries to induce the phenomenon to walk into one's laboratory. We shall first cite a typical case of Nature's making, asking you to believe nothing, but simply to note the record and then introduce you to the attempts to set up laboratory conditions for investigation of the basic processes which may be suspected to be at work.

Chester Hayworth came home late one evening from the amateur astronomy class which he had been teaching at the Dallas Y.M.C.A. He sat on the bed a moment, prepared for sleep. Then suddenly his father stood before him in the room. He was surprised, for his father was, so far as he knew, in California. He noted the heavy work clothes which his father wore, and the caliper rule in his breast pocket. Father and son greeted one another; then the father was there no more. Footsteps were now heard on the walk leading up to the front door; the doorbell rang, and a telegraph messenger turned over the message that his father had just died in California. His father had been working that afternoon on the car, and in the work clothes that hung by his bed was a caliper rule in the breast pocket (8).

Shall we discuss here the problem of coincidence? There is in fact a mathematical method which may be worth something in attempting to evaluate this class of experiences from the vantage point of the theory of probability and the hypothesis of chance coincidence, but I shall not weary you with such matters. For what, in any event, most members of the audience will probably want is not a collection of cases but a series of laboratory experiments, and to these we shall therefore immediately turn, simply noting the psychological problem of the need of the dying father for his son and the impossibility of making immediate contact with him through the senses. Stating the problem in its most general form, how can man satisfy his need for contact with his fellows when the channels of the senses are closed to him?

At the University of Groningen in the Netherlands three members of the Department of Psychology (5) provided a setting for the study of telepathy by cutting a hole through the floor of an upper room in

their laboratory and inserting sheets of glass in the hole, so that they could look down into a lower room in which sat their subject, a student of dentistry. He was sitting blindfold in a black cage. Having the capacity to put himself into a deeply relaxed state, he awaited the impressions from the experimenters in the upper room. They had prepared a board ruled off into forty-eight squares, and by drawing slips of paper at random from bags in the upper room they determined in each experiment which of the forty-eight squares was to be used. Now this board lay just outside of the cage in which the subject sat, and was in full view of the experimenters in the upper room. By extending his hand through a slit, the subject could place it over the board, and move his hand until he felt he was on the right square, the square which the experimenters had just selected at random. As soon as he tapped on this square, the slips of paper were drawn for the next trial. By this and other comparable methods a total of 187 trials were made. Since his chance of getting a square right by chance alone is one in 48, this number of trials should by chance alone yield about four correct calls. Actually, 60 of the calls were correct. This is one of the many studies in which the condition of isolation from ordinary sensory contact with the world, augmented by a state of physiological passivity and absence of orientation to the world immediately surrounding the subject, appears to set free the capacity for another kind of contact with the personal environment.

In the recent experiments of Dr. S. G. Soal (24) of the University of London, and his associates, using two rooms and a series of randomly determined items, targets to which the subject was to direct his guess, and in a series of long-distance experiments between London and Antwerp, we have much more material and a greater possibility for analyzing the psychology of the process. In Soal's studies we have for example much evidence regarding needs, motives, attitudes, interpersonal relations that are responsible for the results. The sharing of common interests, especially an interest in music, seemed, for example, to be highly conducive to working morale. In some of these series, moreover, the subject showed a consistent capacity, over weeks of work, to score significantly high when the telepathic interchange was with certain individuals serving as senders ("agents"), while with other individuals there were no significant results at all (25); just as in his studies at Stanford University Dr. Charles Stuart (26) found that under comparable conditions contact was established paranormally between close friends while it could not be established between mere acquaintances. Even a faint contact is better than none: Whately Carington (7) at Cambridge showed that when a photograph of his office, with desk and equipment, was sent in advance to subjects who were to take part in his long-distance telepathy experiments, the experimental material later randomly drawn for the

experiment came through to the subjects better than in those experiments in which no such personal contact with the subjects was made. Following the suggestion of J. B. Rhine (21) it is customary today to include all these processes under the blanket term extrasensory perception (ESP), whether the subject is striving to catch a mental impression from another person (in which case we speak of telepathy) or whether he is striving to perceive an object (in which case we speak of clairvoyance). But there is a good deal of evidence that in all ESP experiments the personal reaction of the subject to the experimenter is of importance. Hence the need for a system of control which enables us to ascertain exactly what is traceable to the experimenter himself, as well as what is traceable to the experimental method which he uses.

You will have noticed that I have referred to several experiments in which there is a considerable physical distance between the senders and the receivers. Is this not a barrier? On the contrary, in the Groningen study the separation of experimenters and subjects in different rooms improved the scores, and there are many series like the London-Antwerp series already mentioned in which it appears clear that physical distance is in no sense a disturbing factor.

You are I think aware that in terms of modern physics all of the processes which we are describing are unassimilable; the physicists with whom we have shared our problems assure us of a fact which the physiological psychologist would also affirm, namely that a type of radiant energy from the brain registering selectively on the brain of a person miles or even yards away is food for fancy and for so-called science fiction, not for anything in the science of today. Whether the physics of another day will have an interpretation to offer is a question not within the competence of the psychologist of today.

For this reason, when the investigator is asked if he can explain the paranormal, he must reply that he cannot. But it has been my experience at this point that the psychologist and the physicist when confronted with typical data tend usually to take different roads, owing to the different degree of maturity of their respective sciences. The psychologist may decline to look at the evidence because it does not appear to square with modern physics, while physicists, having seen physics change its skin several times in one generation, are interested in new data that might perhaps help it change once again.

In the meantime, the psychology of today has a great deal to offer to the understanding of the paranormal. The more intimately we have penetrated into the nature of these paranormal processes, the more they have resembled in their dynamics the normal processes of psychology. Take for example the part played by motivation; the

paranormal processes, like the normal ones, come to meet our needs, and fade out when there is no longer a need. Take, second, the matter of perceptual structure. In normal perception you will perceive most easily the beginning and the end of a series of items presented; and so it is with extrasensory processes when the items in a closed box must be perceived. In normal perception you will see most clearly the objects which stand out in contrast with the matter to which you have become habituated; and so it is with extrasensory perception. In normal perception you will see best when free from disturbance and distraction; and this holds likewise for the paranormal.

Basically, then, the paranormal processes seem to be forms of human cognition and communication which occur when three conditions are fulfilled: first, there is a need for communication; second, the ordinary sensory channels of communication are unavailable; and third, there is no psychological barrier to our free reaching out to that which we seek. It follows that one of our primary tasks in the laboratory is to study such barriers and find ways to remove them. Many of us incline nowadays to view the gift as present and ready to function when the weeds which clog it are removed; and our attention goes into the art of removing the weeds. We have to identify the weeds, observe their growth and decline, and cope with all their toughness and all their subtlety. This is one of many reasons why we are driven to extremely rigorous and mathematically sensitive methods; we have to know when we are succeeding, and by how much, and which of the methods attains the greatest success.

We have become extremely sensitive to two other research issues: first, in a large group, all working by comparable methods, we must find who are the best subjects, and what makes them good subjects; and second, we must find the best working conditions. Among dozens of experimental studies of these questions I will select but a few to describe. First, the studies by Dr. Gertrude Schmeidler (22, 23), carried out at Harvard from 1942-5 and since that time at City College, New York; and second, the studies by Dr. Betty Humphrey (11, 12) at Duke University. Schmeidler developed the hypothesis that when other things are equal those who believe that extrasensory perception exists should at least be emotionally freer to take part in such tests; they should score at a higher level than those who cannot conceive of the possibility that there is any way to succeed in the task. Her subjects sat in one room in the psychological laboratory, with the door shut, and guessed at page after page of symbols which they knew had been randomly entered on sheets of paper in another room forty feet away. When a few thousands of these guesses had been scored, it became very clear that those who believed there might be such a reality as this were in fact scoring significantly above chance

expectation. Perhaps more surprisingly, those who completely rejected this possibility were scoring below chance expectation. Not content with this, Schmeidler continued the experiments through the college year and through a second year, and then a third, the last part of this period using a room at the Harvard Psychological Clinic, the symbols to be guessed being within a locked cabinet. At the end of the three years' work, the difference between the two groups was of such magnitude as would occur by chance only if such an experiment were conducted twenty thousand times. We have then some tentative confirmation for our hypothesis that resistance to the free use of the paranormal powers can in fact effectively block them: those who believe in them are free to use them.

This is, however, only a beginning. We have still very little information about the personalities of those who can succeed in the task. In pursuing this problem of personality, Schmeidler made use of the Rorschach test, a series of inkblots long used in clinical practice, and known to be rather sensitive in revealing the strengths and weaknesses of individual personalities. When the Rorschach is scored by Munroe's inspection technique, it gives a rough and ready indication of the adequacy of personal adjustment. When now fresh data were collected from subjects who took both the ESP tests and the Rorschach test, it became clear that among those who believed in the reality of the extrasensory processes, the well adjusted ones did considerably better than the poorly adjusted. It was just as if the well adjusted were *able* to do what they basically *wanted* to do; while the poorly adjusted, being bogged down by their own intrapsychic conflicts, could do nothing but make futile guesses, unrelated to the task before them. In this instance also, Schmeidler twice repeated the whole experiment before reaching any settled conclusion. Eilbert and Schmeidler (9) have also gathered extensive data suggesting that hostility toward an experimenter has a markedly depressing effect on scores. The three series offer massive evidence supporting the hypothesis that the extrasensory functions can be either stifled or set free, depending on the disposition of the individual towards the task.

The studies by Dr. Humphrey begin with another projective test of personality, the Elkinsch drawing test, in which the free drawings of each subject are scored as expansive or compressive in revealing free or constrained attitudes towards the social environment. Here in several independent tests the individuals scored as expansive make substantially higher scores in a clairvoyance test than the subjects scored as compressive. In another series of studies, subjects whose responses to a questionnaire suggest that their temperaments are extraverted make substantially higher scores than those classed as

introverted, and this also was twice confirmed by independent data. The total picture begins to suggest an orderly and intelligible relation between the paranormal processes and other psychological processes; in each case the ability to succeed is a personality dimension which in normal everyday psychology we know to be related to the releasing and utilization of one's personal powers.

Now as to the question of the best working conditions for successful work, we are again guided by principles suggested by the spontaneous cases of telepathy. As we saw earlier, deep relaxation and isolation from the distractions of the immediate world of the senses must be accompanied by a definite need to communicate, to make contact with the world beyond the range of the senses. Can we realize these conditions? In the Groningen experiments we already found a good example of this very situation. In many of our current studies we find relaxation and freedom from distraction likewise important. It would not be correct, however, to limit the term relaxation to gross physical relaxation or the semi-sleeping state, for often it applies to a state of casual, easy, or playful attention to the extrasensory task, with confidence of success (19). Good conditions can often be best secured by making minor shifts in the problem to be attacked, changing nothing that is essential in the experiment, but changing detail, for example the size of form of the concealed symbols. In one well-known experiment (20), each change in the concealed material, while other working conditions remained the same, led to a new burst of positive scoring. Basically, the problem is essentially this: how can we get out of the rut of daily dependence upon the here and now, learning to ignore and to reject the cues that our senses provide, and listening to the inarticulate voice that will speak to us only when all else is still? In this respect I believe the problem of the paranormal has much in common with the problem of the mystical; for in both cases there are cues to which we may respond if we strongly wish to respond to them and if we can close our senses to all which interferes.

IV

The question arises of course whether this is the only affinity between the mystical and the paranormal or whether they have some deeper relationship. We might remind you that in primitive religion, in Plato, in early Christianity and the Church fathers, in medieval mysticism, in the Protestant Reformation, and in the mystical and the spiritualist movements of the last hundred years the intimate association between the mystical and the paranormal is constantly affirmed; while in India, treasure house of mystical practices and mystical discipline, the achievement of paranormal powers such as

those of telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition is regularly attributed to the adepts of various forms of self-control, and notably the adepts of the yoga system. I admit that long ago, following Frederic Myers, I made the assumption, just as he did, that these two classes of experience are closely related expressions of the same deep powers of the human personality. Conversation with two men with apparent clairvoyant experiences convinced me that their personal sense of the divine was of the same essential substance. But I think today that this conclusion is subject to many doubts. Actually it is difficult to find in the copious autobiographical material of the great mystics anything much that looks definitely like a telepathic interchange — Swedenborg's awareness of the fire raging at Stockholm (28) is often the first and the last instance offered. It is true that a number of religious leaders—men of very different temperaments, like John Knox, Bishop Wilberforce, and Dwight L. Moody—appear to have had paranormal experiences, but many men with no religious interest have likewise had such experiences.

When it comes to India it is disturbing to note to what degree the uncritical belief in the paranormal powers of the yogi has become consolidated in the West. If there is any cogent evidence, if there are any well-authenticated published cases of telepathy or clairvoyance among the yogi, or among any other of the adepts of India or the East, they are very hard to find, for scientific authentication is a very new idea in relation to such matters. These powers may be a reality of course; the door is always open. But in the meantime we have many studies of very ordinary, non-mystical boys and girls in our colleges who have demonstrated such paranormal powers under conditions involving experimental control at both ends of the train of communication, with randomly selected stimulus materials and with the accredited methods of modern statistics. It may of course be true that when one of the outstandingly successful telepathic subjects goes into a brown study or state of concentration and achieves an extraordinary score, he may be in a state similar to that encouraged by Yoga. But note that he has not in fact gone through the long training processes which are the very heart of Yoga, while some of those who have been through Yogic training indicate that they never encountered anything paranormal. I feel inclined therefore to conclude that the mystical and the paranormal are probably very different ways of responding to the need to transcend our ordinary contacts with the world.

And yet these forms of experience, together with experiences of beauty and much else in human nature besides, have in common the fact they release within us some deep modes of functioning, some aspects of our unconscious selves, which severally and jointly can

teach us much about the extended personality which we meet when we leave the safe little world of every day. Even in our dreams and our moments of waking fantasy or sudden starts of creative thinking, we meet a person much bigger, much brighter than our daily selves; and in the more complete obliteration of the daily attitudes of here and now there is a still larger selfhood to be discovered.

This larger selfhood cannot fulfill itself by feeding narcissistically on its own loveliness or even by the magnificent Platonic or Emersonian phrases about individuality and self-reliance, which lead us to contemplate selfhood as a full embodiment of the divine. On the contrary, the experiences to which I have invited your attention are experiences of reaching out to *other* selves; they are experiences like the experiences of love.

V

We have succeeded, I think, only in showing that the three forms of communication — through normal sensory contact, through mystical union, and through paranormal perception of other persons — respond essentially to the same need, and in some respects operate in the same fashion. We did however find that the mystical and the paranormal tend to appear when normal sensory contact is impossible. I should like therefore to suggest another way of replying to the question whether the mystical and the paranormal are closely related. I believe that the answer depends in each case upon the personality structure of the individual. If the mystical and the paranormal are alternative ways of communicating they might appear side by side in some personalities, and in other personalities might tend to be mutually exclusive, reliance on the one tending to crowd out the other. This is I think what the present fragments of evidence indicate. In the men and women cited by Myers, "trance, possession and ecstasy" lead from the normal into a region where the infinite brightness of the Godhead is felt to reveal at once the mystical unity of the Deity with all His creatures, while the paranormal powers at their highest expression lead into uninterrupted communion with all who are embraced in a fellowship of love. In other persons endowed with a mystical experience, the paranormal makes no appearance, or if it shyly shows its head, it is rejected by the mystical aspirant as an inferior or even a spiritually crippling type of experience.

If then our emphasis be upon the individual differences among human beings in their proneness to these experiences, there is at the same time an imperative need for a kind of thorough-going research of which our generation has not yet begun even to dream. In the words of Herman Lotze:

"We know not what there is hidden from us in the countless stars which touch our lives only when a ray from them reaches our eyes by night; how then should we know our place in the whole great universe, with only a single fraction of which we are acquainted" (15).

We know pitifully little about mystical experience; indeed the fifty years which have elapsed since William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* have added but few stones to the building. The paranormal, opening out before us so vast, so rich a world of new scientific modes of understanding human nature, claims among its full-time investigators in all this wide world only eight or ten individuals. While the mystical and the paranormal experience of men and women of other eras, crystallized into religious institutions, serve to nourish the souls of hundreds of millions in each generation, the mystical and paranormal experiences of those who tread the earth today are the subject of idle ridicule, wonder-mongering gossip. Many a psychologist, unfamiliar with the technical situation in psychical research today, warns his students not to waste their time on something which will interfere with their good status as psychologists. I would not even take your time this evening in the hope that a few would turn with renewed interest to the first-hand study of these investigations were it not for Arthur Clough's reminder:

"And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright."

The great need today is not the need for talk, but the need for research. Some access to the study of the mystical is granted by the methods of biography and autobiography, psychoanalysis, projective testing, and cultural anthropology, and through the laboratories of physiology and psychology. Why should we limit ourselves to the mystics of another era or another clime when we have among us mystics who have nothing to fear from research, and demand of us nothing but scientific curiosity bred of a recognition that that which is off the little beaten track that we daily follow may have special importance for the widening of our horizons? As far as the paranormal is concerned, there is at least a hundred times as much talk about it among the learned professions today as there is actual investigation. While the unknown fascinates, it also repels and frightens. To those of you who are young, inquiring, eager to understand, I would say with all the emphasis of which I am capable: choose with vision and courage those problems which lead not merely to the further fractioning of the hairs which are already being so finely split today by the

methods of experimental science; risk the patient investigation of that which carries you out into the frightening storm of the unknown.

I would not of course venture to say that every mystical experience, or that every paranormal experience, is determined solely by the need to communicate with others. These experiences may have other dimensions than those described here. But I have attempted in this hour to suggest that because man cannot bear to be sealed up within the little cell of his own individuality he uses to the limit of his powers the senses and the outreaching arms which immerse him in the world of his fellows; that when his senses fail him or his arms cannot reach to those whom he seeks, he contrives other modes of seeking, of which two are through the mystical and through the paranormal. In the case of the mystical we understand neither the changes that go on physiologically and psychologically within the experiencing individual nor the nature of that world with which the mystic tells us he has made contact. In the case of the paranormal the research problem is simpler, for over the years much attention has been given both to the kinds of realities with which the laboratory subject can make successful contact and also to the psychological and physiological conditions which accompany and appear to be conducive to the process of communication. We are engaged in the process which our grandfathers called the "naturalization of the supernatural." We have only taken a few steps, and the road will wind over a thousand hills before we understand in all its dimensions the human hunger for communication and the many forms of its expressions. But we are on our way.

I will conclude with some words from William James' essay entitled "What Psychical Research Has Accomplished":

"... If we are to judge by the analogy of the past, when our science once becomes old-fashioned, it will be more for its omission of fact, for its ignorance of whole ranges and orders of complexity in the phenomena to be explained, than for any fatal lack in its spirit and principles. The spirit and principles of science are mere affairs of method; there is nothing in them that need hinder science from dealing successfully with a world in which personal forces are the starting-point of new effects" (14).

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