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The Importance of Spontaneous Cases

GARDNER MURPHY

I am going to talk to you this evening about a problem in which every man and woman, if interested, can take part. Perhaps this branch of psychical research can meet the democratic ideal of participation by all, each in terms of his or her interest and capacity to find time and a way of working in the investigation. We are concerning ourselves this evening, Professor Hart and I, with the problem of spontaneous cases—cases which belong to our field of psychical research but do not call for the special equipment of a laboratory.

I

Classes of Spontaneous Cases

Now, what do we include under the term "spontaneous cases?" I could not possibly cover examples of the entire area, but I am going to devote myself primarily to the following groups of experiences. First, spontaneous telepathy, the exchange of ideas or feelings between persons or, as we shall see, between animals and persons, under conditions which patently belong to another realm of discourse from that of the use of the sense organs. In the second place, precognition, the capacity to make contacts with events which have not yet occurred.

This paper was read by Dr. Murphy at a Meeting of the Society held on January 22, 1953.

Third, apparitions, in the broad sense in which Mr. Tyrrell used the term in his extensive and brilliant analysis of apparitions ten years ago²: to include both crisis experiences, for example, impressions of a person at the time of his death at a distant point, and the perennial or recurrent apparitions to which we may apply the term, "haunting" or "ghost" or "revenant" and many other appellations. And then we shall include, also briefly, the physical phenomena which occur spontaneously, such as the cases of unexplained raps, lights, movements of objects. To be concrete, we shall cite examples which would give the general character of each of the spontaneous phenomena with which we are concerned.

I will quote, as an illustration of telepathy, Rider Haggard's account of a very strange nightmare of his in which he felt oppressed as if he were being forced down by an unbearable pressure, awakening with the horror of it still present. The body of his daughter's dog was found a little later. Apparently, he had been shaken or knocked off a railroad trestle into the river below. Apparently, the death of the dog, preceded probably by a struggle, had been close enough in time to suggest that the dying animal had somehow registered on the sleeping mind of Mr. Haggard.³

As an illustration of precognition, one might cite a very curious British account of collective impressions in which a group of people all observed a horse-drawn vehicle, the individual horse being very clearly seen, and the occupants of the carriage recognized so that they were about to be greeted. Actually, they were not there. A woman came in from outside who had seen the whole equipage go by and was frightened because they hadn't spoken to her.

Then, actually, a half-hour later, all of this was fulfilled.⁴ Apparently, the first impression had been crystallized a half-hour or so before the actual appearance of the visitors; there had been a joint experience referring to what occurred a half-hour later. In this case, as in many of our cases of precognition, there is the possibility that telepathy may have been a more basic explanation, and a possibility that telepathy and precognition may be combined.

In general, the precognitive dream has come in for a special amount of attention among us, since a pretty large number, at least of the good precognitive cases, are dreams which had been recorded or recounted so that they make better evidence when the final facts are available. But I would also mention as precognitive, Dr. Walter

² G. N. M. Tyrrell, "Apparitions," *Seventh Myers Memorial Lecture*, S.P.R., London, 1942.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 53; also *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXIII, 1923, pp. 219-231.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46; also *Phantasms of the Living*, Vol. II, pp. 97-99.

Franklin Prince's case, which I personally find particularly striking, of the woman he had been studying and who had some sort of peculiar second sight. She sketched a drawing of a woman's figure with long hair and with blood pouring down her face and the letters, "K. B." and the words, "struck down." "K. B.," some weeks later, well known to Dr. Prince, was actually struck down and gashed in the face.⁵ The whole thing, anchored upon a flashing impression of an automobile which was not fully enough recorded at the time, suggests, however, a precognition of a serious accident from an automobile, realized in considerable detail to the point of the recognition of the type of injury and where it was on the body.

As an illustration of an apparition, I can hardly do better than refer to the long recurrent haunting of a British home in which at least six different individuals, most of them members of the household, and some of them neighbors, over a period of seven years, saw a female figure come and go, frequently remaining in clear sight a long time.⁶ The young woman, a student of medicine, who gives us the report, made a pretty scientific study of this apparition, followed it over and over again, tried to corner it until the figure, when unable to escape, would disappear. So hard-headed was she that she decided to test the materiality of the phantasm by inserting the ends of fine strings into small pellets of marine glue and attaching one pellet to the wall and the other to the banister, the strings being thus stretched across the stairs. Under these conditions she saw the figure pass through the strings, leaving them intact. So far is this from the stereotyped idea of an extravagant fantasy which a frightened or disturbed mind may produce that we have a calm and objective study of this apparition, almost a member of the household for a period of years.

Then, as an illustration of physical phenomena, still spontaneous rather than experimental, I would mention the extraordinary case which I hope many of you have read, reported by Mrs. Hale, of Montreal.⁷ This is one of the people not afraid to have her name known (it is always better so). Dr. Schwartz talked with Mrs. Hale; I talked with her last summer. This is an experience in which a certain clock had been especially associated with her son. The clock itself would be a symbol, he said, when he left to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. So long as he was alive she felt the clock would go on running.

⁵ Gardner Murphy, "An Approach to Precognition," *JOURNAL A.S.P.R.*, Vol. XLII, 1948, p. 5.

⁶ Miss R. C. Morton, "Record of a Haunted House," *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. VIII, 1892, pp. 311-332.

⁷ Emanuel K. Schwartz, "The Study of Spontaneous Psi Experiences," *JOURNAL A.S.P.R.*, Vol. XLIII, 1949, pp. 128-130.

When a cable was received announcing that the young man was missing, and the terror of death began to face the family, Mrs. Hale's eyes fell on her son's clock and she cried, "If W. were not living I *know* his clock would stop!" Upon this the clock made a big whirring noise and stopped.

The case is a particularly good one in the sense that it is carefully reported and that Mrs. Hale's husband also verifies the fact. As you know, if you have read our JOURNAL in recent years, there have been other cases involving timepieces similarly related to the problem of death crises and the problem of continuity beyond the death crisis. Consequently, if we are interested in spontaneous cases, we find ourselves getting into almost every problem of psychical research. We find telepathy. We find precognition. We find the recurrent appearances connected with catastrophe or with death and some cases which, at least on their face, suggest a continuity of personality acting in the same way after death as before.

II

Why More Cases?

Now, at this point a good many people are going to ask very naturally and rationally: "But haven't you been telling us for a long time that we really ought to try to get experimental control of phenomena? Isn't it desirable to find out the exact conditions under which something happens, and not just gather in more and more spontaneous cases?"

Yes. And I would invite you specially to consider the analogy which we have to make here between our science and certain other sciences which have to deal with both spontaneous and experimental cases. It is by no means only psychical research that has to deal with both. Think for a minute of the situation in geology. What would a geologist be like if he had no laboratory? If the study of mineralogy, the study of the optical properties of crystals, could not be carried out in the laboratory, if these problems could not be approached through experimental techniques, where would geology be? On the other hand, where would geology be if it did not have spontaneous occurrences? Take earthquakes. You don't have experimental control over earthquakes, but what you do is to have your very delicate observation techniques ready. And when the spontaneous occurrence is manifested, you have a carefully made, systematic study of the registration of those shocks at different points in the earth, very much as you have the different observers of an apparition recording how it appeared to each of them at a different point. That is to say, you

attempt to construct a rational interpretation of a phenomenon by being ready when the phenomenon occurs. The same is true, of course, in the science of astronomy, in which you don't have experimental control. But you do have a careful and well-organized way of studying the spontaneous events like, let us say, the sudden appearance of a new star in the heavens, which we don't today regard as a portent of disaster, but which we see in the light of the systematic knowledge of astronomical science.

I believe, therefore, that our job in psychical research consists in having a plan with reference to the gathering of spontaneous cases—a systematic, careful interpretation, the best we can think out—and then testing our hypothesis against fresh facts. There have been quite a number of serious interpretations, in fact I would say, several brilliant, systematic interpretations of spontaneous phenomena. I shall talk to you about three of them this evening. And these are always useful, partly in guiding us toward the better observation of new spontaneous cases, so that as we have a new precognitive dream or see an apparition or even have a trivial telepathic experience, we see how it fits in. We build these phenomena into rational orders and classes the way you classify animals or birds or plants into natural groups, and then if a strange bird appears that doesn't fit your classification, you learn something. It forces you to a new category, a new way of thinking. Or, if you have a theory, you can always check up to see whether it fits the facts. You have a theory about the migration of birds, and if your song sparrows don't come back in the third week in February, you begin to ask yourself: "What is it about the birds or the season?" And you revise your ideas about the migration of birds until you find a way that fits the facts. So it isn't ever quite sound to say that we have too many cases or to say: "Let's simply get down to the classification of what we already have."

The two things go hand in hand: the systematic interpretation of the cases we already have always calls also for the gathering of new cases which throw new light on the nature of these phenomena.

I might give you an illustration of the extraordinary richness of the material if I quote a couple of cases that show how far we are from understanding these phenomena in the light of the cliché that I mentioned a minute ago. Through the various collections of cases in the past—among them the two great British collections, *Phantasms of the Living*⁸ and the "Census of Hallucinations";⁹ Dr. Richet's

⁸ E. Gurney, F. W. H. Myers, and F. Podmore, *Phantasms of the Living*, 2 Vols., Trübner & Co., London, 1886.

⁹ "Report on the Census of Hallucinations," *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. X, 1894, pp. 25-422.

collection¹⁰ and some others in France; Dr. Walter Franklin Prince's collection;¹¹ and the collection Mrs. Dale has made here at the American Society¹²—we have developed a certain idea about telepathy as involving the emergence of a conscious idea, perhaps as the representative of the conscious idea of some other person.

All right, take the following case now, and see if this fits. The father of a young man in the service awakes early one morning. He is unusually restless and spends an hour walking the floor. Then he sets his son's watch by the clock but not quite accurately. He had been carrying the watch but never kept it running. He sets it at 8:17.

Why? No special reason. He is depressed and worried but not aware of what he is worrying about. He sets the watch at 8:17. His motions are somewhat mechanical—just something to do. He doesn't see his son crashing in flames. He doesn't hear any words saying "The end has come."

Not at all. What he does is to register 8:17. And then the fateful message comes through. And it turns out that 8:17 by his time is correct, with allowance of the hour's difference for the region in which his son died—exactly an hour's difference between the death which was at 8:17 and the 8:17 recorded in his own zone.¹³

What we have then here is a motor impulse combined with a vague idea. Is this telepathy? Well, if this is telepathy, then the term covers an extraordinary range of phenomena. That is to say, we begin to get the idea that interactions between human beings are enormously richer and more complicated than those which are represented by my thinking of an orange and then calling up on the 'phone and you say the idea you thought of was an orange. At this kind of conscious level, one might say that what we call naïve telepathy is only one of the many phenomena which it is our business to study, and the deeper implications of which are to be investigated.

I just got a letter from a correspondent in Oklahoma City, a woman whom I met when I was lecturing at the University of Oklahoma more than a year ago (and I just had time to get permission from her to present her experience). I thought it would give you an idea of the kind of thing that pours in all the time. Most of the cases come to Mrs. Dale. In this particular instance, it came to me because I had met this woman at the time I lectured there.

¹⁰ Charles Richet, *L'Avenir et la Prémonition*, Editions Montaigne, Paris, 1931.

¹¹ W. F. Prince, "Human Experiences," *Bulletin XIV*, Boston S.P.R., 1931.

¹² L. A. Dale, "A Series of Spontaneous Cases in the Tradition of *Phantasms of the Living*," *JOURNAL A.S.P.R.*, Vol. XLV, 1951, pp. 85-101.

¹³ L. A. Dale, "Spontaneous Experiences Reported by a Group of Experimental Subjects," *JOURNAL A.S.P.R.*, Vol. XL, 1946, pp. 55-63.

"I dreamed I was looking in the show window of a store and saw the display of artists' supplies with easel, tubes of paints, and other items. The tube of white paint was open and looked as though it had been used. On observing this, I realized suddenly that all these items actually belonged to me and had been sent to me as a gift from my daughter. I resented the merchant's having used them for display.

"This dream took place on Sunday morning. I had planned to go to a certain movie that afternoon. But when afternoon came, I changed my mind and I went to another movie, entitled, *An American in Paris*. Midway in the picture was an incident in which a wealthy woman gives to a young artist a studio and all the supplies for his work. He is torn between the pleasure of the gift and the sense of obligation. As he thrills at the sight there is a close-up of the easel with the tubes of paint, etc., with the white paint tube open and, in fact, the close-up was an exact duplication of my dream which I had interpreted as a show window display five hours earlier.

"Then a couple of weeks ago, while I was sitting at a movie, looking at a newsreel, a sharp odor of the kind of preservative we used in biology laboratory when I was an undergraduate came to my consciousness. I could not account for it. Following the newsreel, there was a short in technicolor. It started as a gay vacation experience in California waters, then showed that it was actually an exploration cruise for some members of the California Institute of Oceanography. Half way through the picture were views of the cruising party doing a study of fish in southern waters, and soon a view of one member opening a bottle containing a specimen and grimacing as she held the bottle to her nose and indicated the unpleasantness of the odor. For me, the odor was perceived fifteen minutes earlier, and it continued until this scene, when it suddenly left as it came."

Now, of course, the first thing that you do is try to get detailed corroborative evidence, records made, or statements from other people to whom this was told. We have followed for some years a policy of saying: "Anything that looks like a paranormal communication interests us and we will deal with these materials under two general heads: the best authenticated evidential material, and other cases which are not evidentially of the highest order but may nevertheless throw some light on the psychology of the process."

Would you count these as cases of telepathy? Would you count them as cases of precognition? Well, if you forced me to use a category, I would probably call them precognitive. But at the same time I would say: "This isn't telling us much."

What we are doing here is to take a little tag—in this case the impression of the evil odor which comes without any logical meaning

at the time. This is a tag, so to speak, like a little symbol that appears in our half-waking or our dream experience, and later on we may be able to understand this. We may see through the symbol, as in the interpretation by Joseph of Pharaoh's dream. We may be able only to "half-guess" it, but very often it is only by the systematic gathering of such cases that we begin to understand the extraordinary richness of the symbolic apparatus, on which, very largely, we are dependent when a thing as complex and difficult as telepathic communication is involved.

I would guess, then, that the collection of these cases in which we have symbolic reference to the future may be very instructive in helping us to understand our relation to time and place even when the cases do not belong in the category of fully authenticated experiences.

If one still asks, "Why are new spontaneous cases useful?" I would reply: "They challenge our theories." When people have begun to organize an hypothesis—and it is difficult to keep in mind all the hundreds of published cases—they become addicted to a theory and publish the theory, and then there are a few stray cases that don't quite fit. There is an enormous temptation to make the stray cases fit in Procrustean fashion in the scheme once set up.

You know, the only thing we can do is what is done in all science, and that is to keep experimenting with interpretations until we find the one that really squares with all our facts without any forcing. And we plainly have not yet got an interpretation which squarely meets all the facts.

III

Theories of Spontaneous Cases

But I thought I should tell you about three of the theories of spontaneous experiences. They all deal rather heavily with telepathy, although they all make some place for precognitive experiences and they all make a place for crisis apparitions and hauntings.

The first is the theory of Frederic Myers, the first great systematist in psychical research whose extraordinary two-volume work was published just fifty years ago, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*,¹⁴ which contains hundreds of well-organized cases documenting the various categories which have been described. Now, Myers, with special reference to death coincidences and crisis apparitions (for example, seeing the image of a person with his clothing

¹⁴ F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2 Vols., Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1903.

drenched and dripping water at the moment when the person at a distance is actually drowning), is particularly concerned with the question of what the dying person contributes to our experience. Sometimes the impression is as if clairvoyant rather than telepathic, in the sense that the person who sees the dying man doesn't get any response from him; the dying man doesn't seem to turn and look at him or call to him.

Take the much-quoted case of Mrs. Paquet who, busy at her household duties, suddenly sees her brother trip over a rope and fall to his destruction shortly after he had been tripped by a hawser on a harbor boat in Chicago.¹⁵ In these instances, the experience suggests that the receiver, the percipient, is, so to speak, outside, looking at something happening. But in an extraordinary number of these cases there is a more direct contact, as if the person undergoing the crisis could in some way be reaching out or trying to make a contact.

There are actually experimental cases, of course, where a person has tried to project himself at a distance. Now Myers convinced himself that what typically happens in these cases is that the person who is undergoing the crisis manages to occupy the space in which the percipient is located. In particular, he urged this in the case of collective experiences where two or three or more people see the apparition. The striking fact, you know, is that in collective experiences, there is not a mechanical carbon-copy process by which all the individuals receive the same impression. On the contrary, each sees it appropriately in terms of the point from which he is looking. If you think over cases you have read about, you will immediately realize how this makes sense. Each person gives structure to the experience as if there were a physical object to be seen from his own vantage point.¹⁶

What actually is happening then, says Myers, is that the person undergoing the crisis is invading the percipient's space. Sometimes Myers falls back on the conception of a metetherial environment, which is not quite space, but another kind of space-like something. But to all intents and purposes, he is arguing that you transport yourself through space at the time of your own death or catastrophe and register upon other people.

Actually, I think one could say that no great advance over this theory, which might account for many cases, was made until the time

¹⁵ Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, "On the Evidence for Clairvoyance," *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. VII, 1891-1892, pp. 32-35.

¹⁶ Tyrrell has particularly developed the point that when the apparition appears, it blocks off the light just as a solid object would, and that it is reflected in a mirror just as a solid object would be, although actually one can pass one's hand through the image and there is every evidence that it is not a physical reality.

of the systematic thinking which Mr. Tyrrell had to do when he was asked to deliver the *Myers Memorial Lecture* in 1942. He took this job very seriously. As a matter of fact, he produced a volume of over 120 pages. It is not just a little lecture, but is an amazingly close-thought, brilliant, integrated, all-around consideration of the problem of apparitions. If you really want some exciting, serious reading on psychical research; if you really want something that will make you think and will give you lots of live, interesting, and well-authenticated cases, I cannot urge upon you anything more important than Mr. Tyrrell's book, *Apparitions*.

Now what, according to Tyrrell, are the problems that have to be taken into account?

In the first place, there is the fact that the impression obeys psychological laws and doesn't follow physical laws as we know them. The structure of an apparition is determined to a very large degree by our knowledge of how people and things behave. We tend to cast the impression into a reasonable form. And if there are, as I said, several people present, each one will use the dynamics of his own basic ways of perceiving in giving structure to this impression. Moreover, the different feeling-tones of respect, affection, fear, and so on, toward a person are registered just as if the living entity were still present.

Can this be explained on the basis of telepathy? Can this be explained by saying, as some have done, that the telepathic image represents a certain force projected from the brain of the person undergoing the crisis? Or can we say, as F. C. S. Schiller did, "Apparitions are the dreams of the dead"? This might seem plausible, insofar as the apparition may occur many months or years after the time of death. Can we actually do this, when we have to face the fact, documented by dozens and dozens of cases, that it takes work by the individual perceiver to produce the apparition, each person producing the kind of apparition that makes sense to him?

Suppose I have a dream of driving up a steep road to Walnut Grove in California. You haven't happened to be in Walnut Grove. If I try to convey this to you, I won't try to throw a sort of motion picture impression of it into the mind of each one of you. But you will actively try to understand me; you will ask: "Did you mean this?" You will remember similar places where you have been, and each of you will construct a picture of Walnut Grove based upon my words, poor as they are, but each of you will construct a different picture, each in his own way. This is very different from mere photographic reproduction.

Now this is just what Tyrrell finds as he analyzes apparitions. He gives, I think, unimpeachable evidence that it takes not only work on

the part of the person initiating the impression but work, integration, meaningful activity on the part of every person receiving it. That is not a mechanical process of passive reception.

Tyrrell goes on to show that this is not done consciously. You perceive actively, but unconsciously. This is true of all perception, both normal and paranormal. Suppose I show you a watch and a match box, and I say: "Which one is nearer?" You instantly solve the problem. You don't do this by figuring out the size of your retinal impression or the amount of effort taken to focus the eyes, and all the things which indicate that the watch would have to be so far and the match box so far. You do this instantly, or as we say, intuitively.

A series of beautiful experiments has been going on at Dartmouth College and at Princeton University and elsewhere on the ways in which we are able to make these distant intuitive interpretations, so that we can appropriately gauge the distance and size and shape of an object. The task takes us months and years to acquire, as you will see if you watch an infant gradually learning how to interpret the various cues which are received through the sense organs from the outer world.

Tyrrell shows that we interpret these apparitions in the instantaneous and intuitive way that you and I use when we perceive that a person is angry or frightened. It is an amazingly complicated and mostly unconscious rather than conscious integration. This is what he means by mid-level functioning. The process is not conscious; only the end-result is conscious, by which you instantly recognize that a certain person is happy or frightened. Tyrrell says, then, that your perception of an apparition is not like the impression on a photographic plate; you use your own personality when you are involved in experiencing an occurrence; and therefore it represents, not just a conscious impression, but something much deeper.

Finally, he goes on to show that there is in all this a sort of coming to terms, a sort of a compromise between the communicator and the person receiving the communication. He uses the analogy of getting an effect across through the device of the stage. He speaks of the producer and the stage carpenter. In this case, you realize that the producer has the fundamental basic personality function of communicating to another person. But he may not be able to communicate at a conscious level; he may be able only to register upon the other person the fact, let us say, that he is undergoing a crisis. And the percipient instead of seeing him may get an impression, let us say, of disaster, and later may see a tomb, or may see flames or something characteristic of the percipient or of the crisis, not a mechanical

impression from the agent. The stage carpenter is the mid-level function, the deep unconscious process by which the message is converted into an impression.

In addition to Myers' theory and Tyrrell's theory we have one other theory to consider and its proponent is here with us this evening: Professor Hart, who will talk to you about a fifth-dimensional conception of the way in which the paranormal represents an integrated personality function which goes beyond the ordinary three space dimensions and the single time-dimension that we ordinarily use in science.¹⁷

I would say that this also is one of the attempts to go beyond the earlier hypotheses which have been tested, which have been found to be good, but which don't seem completely to cover the facts. To give an illustration of something not covered by any theory of spontaneous cases: the celebrated cases reported by Pagenstecher in Mexico to which Dr. Walter Franklin Prince gave so much attention.¹⁸ They involve a very complicated series of catastrophes, perceived under clairvoyant conditions, as if the individual clairvoyant were able to get out of the ordinary time-space world and find there a way to another time-space point at which a catastrophe had occurred—as if there were a sort of moving bead which can get outside of the ordinary firm structure of this world and tune in at different points in time-space.

Now, we have, therefore, what we might call a pretty good, but not an ideal theory, as far as we know. We are working constantly to try to get a better theory in the sense that it will explain more spontaneous cases, and in the sense that it may so deepen our understanding of human personality and its relationship to other persons and things of this world that it may enable us to develop a better philosophy of man. On the other hand, it may help us in the establishment of experimental studies through which we may be able to find out more exactly what is involved. In other words, we may be able to do better laboratory work if we have more and better spontaneous cases. We have lots of cases, but we always need a new angle: a case that teaches us something we haven't been able to get before; a case that helps us to decide between different theories and to go on from where we are.

Here is a place where we have to pause in terms of a very serious

¹⁷ Hornell Hart, "The Psychic Fifth Dimension," *JOURNAL A.S.P.R.*, Vol. XLVII, 1953, pp. 3-32 and (with associates) "The Psychic Fifth Dimension, II," *JOURNAL A.S.P.R.*, Vol. XLVII, pp. 47-79.

¹⁸ Gustav Pagenstecher, "Past Events Seership: A Study in Psychometry" (edited by Dr. Walter Franklin Prince), *Proc. A.S.P.R.*, Vol. XVI, 1922. See also "Psychometrical Experiments with Senora Maria Reyes de Z.," *Proc. A.S.P.R.*, Vol. XV, 1921, pp. 189-314.

question that can always be raised, which I think was first well-formulated by Margaret Pegram Reeves.¹⁹ She argued, I think, very effectively, that there is a basically different kind of dynamics involved in experimental cases and in the spontaneous cases. That is to say, the telepathy or the precognition that you can get in the laboratory is different, partly because the motivation is less intense. Perhaps the situation may seem somewhat artificial. Basically, she says, it is not quite the same thing. You are calling into play a different level of the personality, because in the experimental case, you cannot produce crises in the laboratory. You have to respect the individuality of the people you are working with. You get merely the desire to cooperate, the desire to do the job. The result is that the symbolism which is used and the method of working are at the conscious level. It isn't deep-level work. In fact, she intimates toward the end of her paper that maybe the basic dynamics worked out to explain laboratory telepathy may not be adequate, and may not give a complete picture of the dynamics of spontaneous telepathy, which springs from a deeper level.

If that is true, then how are we to respond to Dr. Rhine's belief that the value of spontaneous cases lies in suggesting hypotheses which then can be tested in the laboratory? This doesn't quite ring true to me. I would think that there were certain instances where spontaneous cases would indeed lead to hypotheses that could be tested in the laboratory. But remember the analogy that I drew a few minutes ago with geology and astronomy. I tried to make the point that there is a definite place in science for the systematic arrangements of events which are not under experimental control. And I firmly believe that psychical research will be able to create a systematic and intelligible picture of what happens in the deep-level interactions of human beings, under the heads of telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, whether we happen to be smart enough to document these things in the laboratory or not. If we can document them in this way, fine. I don't think that this means that the *only* purpose in spontaneous cases lies in the preparation of laboratory tests.

IV

Individuality

Now, of course, the whole picture so far suggests that human personality is a generic universal thing, that you will recognize the presence of human personality anywhere, in the same way that you

¹⁹ Margaret Pegram Reeves, "A Topological Approach to Parapsychology," *JOURNAL A.S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXVIII, 1944, pp. 72-82.

would recognize a walnut or a spruce tree. But we differ more from each other than spruce trees do. We are dynamically more complex in our individuality than spruce trees. And we begin to see as we study the dynamics of apparitions, precognitive dreams, and so on, that the qualitative differences between people are very great. This is the sort of thing that suggests to me that as we gather more and more cases, we shall contribute to personality study, not only in the way that Mr. Tyrrell suggests—throwing light upon the deep unconscious sources of power, capacity to live, to make contacts with other people, which belong to all humanity—but also by throwing light upon those complex and subtle factors which make one person more able to convey information than another, and another person more able to receive impressions than another.

If you go through the reports the English Society has published, and those which Mrs. Dale has published for us, I think you will be impressed with a sort of chronic individualism and the fact that a person who has recurrent experiences reveals himself in his experiences. You begin to realize that Miss Bishop,²⁰ who wrote a long series of accounts of precognitive dreams, was probably *not* a person who would be equally good, let us say, at perception of crisis apparitions. Each person seems to betray also qualitatively a certain kind of symbolism as in the case of the record I read you from the woman in Oklahoma. So that along with our understanding of the nature of this mid-level or unconscious contact we make with each other, we have the possibility of understanding individuality. I think it is an extraordinary thing that although we have had psychical research with us for three-quarters of a century, we know very little about individuality in relation to these phenomena. We can talk about telepathy quite a long while. We can talk about apparitions quite a long while. But who sees them and why? How explain the fact that certain people in this audience have had precognitive dreams at times, and that others have not? Or that some may have seen an apparition, while others have not? Some people haven't experienced either of these things but they have had uncanny hunches and other unexplained experiences.

There is a very rich field here for the study of human individuality. That is the final answer that I will make to people who say: "With all this stuff that you people have published, why do you want more cases?"

In summary, we have three aims: first, to test how far the principles suggested by Myers, Tyrrell, Hart, and others are right;

²⁰ G. M. Bishop, "Foreknowledge in Dreams," *Journal S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXII, 1941, pp. 50-59.

second, to understand their dynamics more fully; and third, to understand human individuality more fully in the course of these studies.

V

A New Study of Spontaneous Experiences

That is the reason we are starting a comprehensive study of spontaneous experiences at the American Society for Psychical Research. A number of us had been thinking for years that the time had about come. Almost simultaneously, Mr. Stevens, Mrs. Allison, and I all came to the idea recently that it might be possible to launch in 1953 a large-scale study of the phenomena I have described—cases having to do with precognition, clairvoyance, telepathy, apparitions, hauntings, physical phenomena—all the spontaneous cases of the sort you see if you follow our *JOURNAL*, about which, fundamentally, the same basic rules are to be laid down that we have in the past. These rules include (1) emphasis upon well-described cases; (2) emphasis, if possible, on recent cases; (3) emphasis on cases where there is confirmation. But there is no final, absolute, or arbitrary rule. The collection of the cases will be in the hands of a committee, probably enlarged, ultimately, beyond what it is today. Professor Hornell Hart, who has been a pioneer in this area, and, together with his wife, has made signal contributions to the understanding of spontaneous cases, has come up from Duke University to be with us tonight. He will serve as Chairman. Professor Ducasse of Brown University is another member. Mrs. Allison, Mrs. Dale, and I are the other members. We shall all be working on the problem of collecting and editing spontaneous cases; trying to make sense, trying to get new insights, trying to test hypotheses. And, as I said at the beginning, there is an opportunity for everybody who is interested to help us do our work. Oftentimes the question is: "What can we contribute?" Here is something you can contribute. You can help gather cases. Nothing is more important. And we will try to explain to you how it is to be done.

Now, I would like to ask Professor Hornell Hart to take over and talk to us for a few minutes.

[Following Dr. Murphy's lecture, Professor Hornell Hart gave a brief account of his theories bearing on the processes of paranormal phenomena (see footnote 17). He then administered a short questionnaire on psychical experiences to those present, which he had prepared for the occasion. A more comprehensive questionnaire was promised to those whose answers warranted further inquiry. We look forward to Professor Hart's report on the results of the questionnaires in a lecture he has been invited to give to the Society in the autumn.—Ed.]