

A Qualitative Study of Telepathic Phenomena¹

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I

I would like to share with you some observations and some thoughts about telepathy to which all of us, in one way or another, have been driven as we encounter telepathic phenomena. If what I offer reminds you of many things you have already seen and thought about yourselves, do not be surprised that I shall attempt to say nothing fundamentally new. My purpose tonight is a little different; it is to shake down into some sort of order a set of working ideas about what telepathy might mean and how we might do better research on telepathy.

Now one could do this by considering modern experimental and quantitative measurements of the degree of success obtained in telepathic communication. There are, however, many such reports available, and it seems that we are weaker, actually, in qualitative material today than in the quantitative, in that for a long time we have had some theories about how telepathy works but no adequate reconnaissance, no adequate set of tests for our theories.

I take for granted that there is an approach that makes sense from a scientific point of view and which does give us qualitative information. As an example take an experiment² done shortly after the First World War at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands which is well known to many of you. It was carried out by three members of the psychology department who created a laboratory for the purpose of the experiment by cutting a hole through the floor of an upper room and arranging to transmit their mental instructions to the subject who sat in a little cage in the room beneath the hole. Uncanny successes were maintained over a period of several weeks involving almost 200 individual trials in which the man in the lower room designated correctly a number which had been chosen (1 out of 48, by lot, from a random selection of numbers) by a person in the upper room.

What do we know about this *qualitatively* aside from the sheer fact that the subject made brilliant successes? First, we know that

¹ This paper was delivered by Prof. Murphy at a meeting of the Society on April 21, 1961.

² H. J. F. W. Brugmans, "Some Experiments in Telepathy Performed in the Psychological Institute of the University of Groningen," *Compte-Rendu du Premier Congrès International des Recherches Psychiques*, 1922, pp. 396-408.

the subject put himself into a sort of "brown study," or very relaxed state; in fact, at times he showed a tendency almost to go to sleep or into a hypnoidal, semi-sleeping condition. Second, tentative confirmation of this special state was obtained by studying the electrical phenomena of the skin by means of the galvanic skin responses. Third, it seems likely his state of relaxation was such that it required only small doses of alcohol to carry him over into an almost sleeping condition. Apparently this added to the relaxation. In the fourth place, we seem to have some tentative evidence that he was not reaching the minds of the three professors who were upstairs. He was not stealing or filching information from their minds but rather was being pushed actively by them. At the Second International Congress of Psychical Research at Warsaw in 1923, I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Brugmans, the leader of this group. I said something like this: "How do you *know* that you were dealing with telepathy rather than clairvoyance?"

"Well," he said, "I can be pretty sure it was telepathy because we found as we took turns that we had to push mentally the subject's hand which was waving vaguely in the air. It had to come to rest and he had to tap twice on the right square on this board which had 48 squares. We pushed his finger back and forth mentally." This was not passive absorption or stealing of information; it was a dynamic impress on the passive subject by the active experimenters.

Here are four impressions, then, as to the qualitative nature of the telepathic process, and all of these questions raised here concerning the urge to make contact, the nature of the responding mind, the nature of the activating minds, and the physical and physiological conditions have remained significant problems for further research in our field to this day.

At this point I want to remind you that Frederic Myers, who wrote the great classic in our field, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*,³ made an elaborate investigation of the way in which telepathic impressions come through. Myers decided to differentiate two basic modalities of reception which he called "sensory automatism" and "motor automatism." Now an automatism is an involuntary act which still has purpose. I would not call a reflex, like the iris contraction, for example, an automatism. But I would speak of an unconscious but purposive act like the way one reaches for one's keys as one comes home. This is a highly purposive and effective act but one does it unconsciously. I would call this an automatism. And I would agree with Myers that some are sensory.

³ Longmans, Green and Company, New York, 1903.

In a sensory automatism, one catches an impression; it is like a sense impression. A so-called crystal-gazer looks in a glass ball, a pool of water, a drop of blood, tea leaves, or the embers of a fire, and these things take on a special pattern and have a meaning. And as one gazes into the embers or into the pool of water, one says, "They're advancing!" When asked, "Who is advancing?" the answer is "the enemy!" And the apprehensiveness of the subject shows that he or she (it is usually she) has given more than chaotic meaning, but rather has given highly structured and important human information from this essentially lifeless or formless material. This is a sensory automatism: *sensory* because it appeals to the senses, *automatism* because it did not come about because of organized acts of will but automatically arrived from a deeper level of the mind.

A *motor* automatism would be one in which some member of the body, usually the hand (as in the case from the Groningen Laboratory), carries out a purposive act often without sensory associations, often in order to express some significant meaning. Very often, along with automatic writing, there may be gestures and postures which are assumed by the subject as a way of making the action more real, sometimes even impersonating those from whom the messages are supposed to be transmitted. Motor automatisms, then, of which automatic writing is the commonest, mediate unconsciously received information which, at least in many cases, is telepathic.

But I want to illustrate this from the celebrated experiments of Burt and Usher,⁴ one of the most successful telepathic results ever published. A and B, some hundreds of miles apart (one in Prague, the other near Paris) undertook a telepathic experiment at 8:30 in the evening. At this time, while keeping track of the time, A was at a little Bohemian restaurant in Prague surrounded by people who were eating roast capon. They were munching and making a lot of noise in a restaurant with green hangings, and A, as far as possible, was pushing out of mind the strumming on the piano which was going on all of the time. Far away, the subject B was trying to make his mind blank and not succeeding. But he had, fortunately, asked his friend C to listen in at the same moment (considering the adjustment of the clock). C wrote automatically, first drawing a large grid or criss-cross pattern, then writing: "Roast capon, bread sauce, three men, much talk, green hangings, somebody strumming." Furthermore, there was a curious background of by-play in this case: after the dinner of roast capon, our agent (A) had, at the same table, begun a game of chess.

⁴ *Annals of Psychical Science*, Vol. VIII, 1909, pp. 561-600.

Suddenly recalling the experiment, he hurriedly withdrew to a quieter room to carry out his role in the experiment. What happened, though, is not that C *saw* the chess board; he *drew criss-cross lines*. Moreover, he did not necessarily see, in his mind's eye, a green hanging. He wrote automatically "a green hanging." All down the line, it is expressed in motor, not in sensory form. Myers argued that the channel is relatively unimportant. It is the unconscious repetition that is important (or, as he phrased it, the "subliminal uprush" of material).

In more recent years, largely as a result of the influence of psychiatry (particularly psychoanalytic ways of thinking), there has been more and more stress placed on the fact that there are two important and necessary preconditions before telepathy can occur. First, there must be a need, i.e., it must be personally important, more than just a random association. It must spring from something that has significance to the subject. Second, the coast must be clear; or, if you like, the track must be open, rather than obstructed. The mind must be blank, rather than preoccupied. There must be a vacant space in which something can enter. In the case of preliterate peoples who make use of a pool of water or a drop of blood to gain information, one knows immediately that if the waters are troubled a message has already been received. If one wants to get ready for a message that has not yet come, one must make oneself open and clear; the deep waters must run very slowly in order for their open surface to reflect what may come upon them. To recapitulate, one must simultaneously have a strong motive to receive, and one's mind must be blank.

There has been a great deal of convergence in observers about this matter. Myers points to this; the Burt and Usher experiment points to it; so does the Brugmans experiment; and the often-quoted experiments of Mrs. Upton Sinclair in *Mental Radio*⁵ refer to the special inculcation and preparation of a favorable mental state in which the surface of the mind is, so to speak, made bare and clean while still the motivation is strong.

Now certainly this is not enough. We have done hundreds of experiments under conditions of high motivation and deep relaxation and semi-sleeping conditions without any insured telepathic material coming through. Certainly there must be other factors. And yet, there is a very great value in pushing these two as far as possible, and I want to stress the importance of two investigators, each of whom gave many years to the utilization of these concepts and constant effort to getting additional ideas which would make them especially useful.

⁵ Upton Sinclair, *Mental Radio*, Monrovia, California, 1930.

First, there are the labors of W. Whately Carington, a Cambridge University scholar in England. He was a physiologically trained man who worked with the air force after the First World War. Very much interested in psychical research, he began more and more to associate himself with the view that the everyday normal association of ideas (when something calls to mind something else that is of interest to one, such as that tennis makes one think of golf, or child makes one think of toys) must be given its full weight along with the empty slate or open field, and the problem of motivation.

Not often does an investigator live to see the full fruition of an essentially new idea which he has introduced. Carington carried out a long series of rapid-fire experiments, one after another, mostly during the war years and immediately after D-Day in 1945. He died shortly thereafter—one might almost say in a blaze of glory, after having completed his sixth huge investigation of this approach to telepathic phenomena. This later became available to the public under the title of *Thought Transference*.⁶

Now Carington's elementary idea is so obvious that ordinary people could never see it at all. It takes a highly creative person to see the most obvious idea in the world, like the fact that an apple falling on your head is the same thing as the moon falling constantly toward the earth so as to create a circle under the influence of centripetal force. Carington suggested that all ideas are woven together by the classical laws which had been worked out by the so-called Association school of psychology. One is the law of contiguity, i.e., things which are experienced together are likely to be recalled together. If there is a particular street lamp that you pass before you make a right turn as you are driving home, when you come to it you will vividly think of home a hundred yards beyond; or if it gets dark and you wonder why the lights are not on, a particular degree of darkness is associated with the turning on of the lights and you get to expect the lights to be turned on at that moment. In other words, the mind is a tissue of connections simply based on things having been together in the past. Some associations are based on similarity: lions may make you think of tigers. A few may be based on contrast, such as when night makes one think of day. The contiguity associations will make up a large part of the total. Carington thought the telepathic process might be helped along by taking things which are somewhat related by contiguity anyway and then picking (in order to insure proper experimental control) material for the experiment which is randomly chosen but which could make use

⁶ Creative Age Press, New York, 1946.

of the strength of ordinary associations to act as a sort of carrier wave for telepathically received impressions.

To illustrate: suppose Carington wants to sit in his office in Cambridge and convey to us an old-fashioned sailboat drawing. He wants us to get this image of the sailboat just as clearly as we can. It is one out of hundreds of things which can be drawn by flipping through a dictionary; or more precisely, by using a penknife to enter the dictionary at a particular point and selecting the first drawable object on the page which has been thus selected. Suppose now he wants to transmit the particular sailboat rather than some of the other hundreds of things given. Carington's idea was that it would make it a little easier for the subject if he had a photograph of the desk and room where the sailboat picture was exposed. This would not help the subject get the sailboat by any ordinary means because the same photograph would be used in connection with every target picture: the ant-eaters, the Mallard ducks, the hydro-planes, and the internal combustion engines: all the objects used are to be shown against the backdrop of Carington's desk. In other words, the subject has got to sit down in Edinburgh or Leeds or some other university town in Britain, while Whately Carington is trying to transmit sailboats. Carington argues that having a photograph of his room will make more real to the subject what he should try to get, for the very simple reason that in the mind of the sender the sailboat is part of the context of Carington's room-table-office. This is what I mean by saying that the telepathic impression is almost like being on a carrier wave; it is supported and brought through by virtue of the normal associations that are present in Carington's own mind between his office and the particular object chosen as the target.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating and there is a good deal of evidence from those last years of Carington's life that the tissue of associations in the sender's own mind reinforced and helped in some way to pattern the stimulus material that was in this way transmitted. What Carington did in his so-called "inter-university experiment," in which people served as subjects from six university groups, was to show, apparently, that each university received at better than a chance level the material prepared for that particular group, as compared to similar material prepared for the other five university groups. Each university group, so to speak, got the randomly selected material which, in Carington's plan, belonged to those evenings which were set aside for work with that particular university group. A few years ago we published as an *American Proceedings*⁷ an account of one of the Carington

⁷ Whately Carington, "Experiments on the Paranormal Cognition of Drawings," *Proc. A.S.P.R.*, Vol. 24, January, 1944.

investigations making use of this principle because we thought it was so important.

Carington's idea, then, is a bold, supplementary idea about what telepathy may be. He suggests it may be a sort of reinforcement of our own normal associations in which, to be sure, there has to be a paranormal element but which can work embedded within the normal associations of the normal mind. In the case of the ordinary interchange as between husband and wife when the husband gets the message from the wife not to forget the "Seven Up" or the butter when he comes home, it is presupposed that the husband and wife have many common associations. They know each other's eating habits; they know what it is the role of the husband to buy at the supermarket when he comes home, and the very fact that they have this web of associations helps the particular thing to get through. If someone questions whether the presence of similar associations may prevent any *paranormal* success from being scored, of course there must be a control series of randomly chosen material as in the Brugmans' Dutch experiment, if we are to assert that something paranormal has occurred. Of course there must be material which is selected by chance alone and which could *not* be simply the result of the associations of husband and wife. But once one takes that precaution, it would seem to be a mistake, really, to strip away all the common associations which the sender and the receiver may possess.

We now have three ideas: the idea of strong motivation, the idea of open tracks ready to receive the impression, and the idea of utilizing to the full the associated networks which are shared by sender and receiver.

The second person I want to mention who emphasized deep relaxation and strong motivation but also additional qualitative factors is René Warcollier, a French chemical engineer who gave special attention to the receiving process. His brilliant experiments with a small group of friends were published in the *Revue Métapsychique* over a twenty-year period. There were a dozen or fifteen people who met regularly once a week for such experiments and who, for a while, did an experiment with our own New York group similarly concerned with the transmission of such ideas.

Among the many ideas offered by Warcollier,⁸ most of them related to his own work as a subject in telepathy experiments, emphasis is placed first upon the technique of increasing passivity or the technique of making the mind open or blank, and second,

⁸ René Warcollier, *Experimental Telepathy*, Boston Society for Psychic Research, Boston, Mass., 1938.

on the analysis of the kinds of material received. He would give a whole issue, for example, to the question of the contents of the materials that were transmissible. And other articles dealt with the process of communication: the form or character of the communication process itself. He finally arrived at five generalizations which I will attempt to repeat, all of which have been adequately confirmed by other people's work, and two or three of which I think you will find are reminiscent of things I have already said in recounting the work of others.

First, there is the matter of *fragmentation*. Almost never will a picture or tableau be transmitted as intended. If one tries to transmit one of the great Raphael frescoes, the percipient may get a man in a toga, a cloud mass, that is, something that is reminiscent of the original fresco, and perhaps going far beyond what could be attributed to ordinary association or coincidence, but he will not get the whole thing. Rather, pieces will be transmitted. They will not be so fragmented as to be minute, macerated into fine powder, as it were; but they will be broken into chunks. One might find a hand here, a robe there. One might expect to find the symbolic wolf representing the founding of Rome. In other words, there will be large meaningful chunks of material but fragmented and removed from their original context.

Second, you will get *duplication*, as if—to personify the material—once getting through it says, "Ah, I got through. It's a big day! I'll do it again! I'll do it again!" This same thing occurs, of course, in dreams, everyday brown studies, daydreams, etc. It is a sort of "moment of triumph" in which the message is hammered out in characteristic rhythm, repeatedly.

There was a very dramatic case which illustrates this in the French experiments where a giraffe was transmitted. It was hard to get the whole head and neck of the giraffe, but you may remember how, in some representations, the two ears and the two horns may make a curious little cluster of four little bulbs, four little protuberances. In the French experiment, the impressions came in groups of four; they look almost like ice cream cones in the drawings that are reproduced although there is other material to suggest the zoo-animal character of the experimental targets. The material is not in the form of one ear appearing once. It is rather a sort of drum beat on fours.

Very often a detail, like the detail of a boat, or an army officer's uniform, will be given over and over again. And with this goes the third principle, that of *accretion*. Having given the details, there then seems to be a clumsy effort to put them together and accumulate, or build up something. How often we see material—as in the Burt and Usher experiment, for example—which illustrates

nicely this accretion of detail. It is like a clumsy attempt to create what could not be created very well. The green hangings, the chess game, and the capon are essentially served up as loose detail, and yet they are compactly and rapidly rendered one after the other. If you look at the actual drawing, you will realize it is more complex than it needed to be to represent the chessboard as if the subject couldn't "get free." Mrs. Upton Sinclair's material is full of this same note: a detail, and then that detail given over and over together with other details as if there were an attempt to say the same thing. Here again, this is true of one's dreams as well. Often a dream is thus crudely repetitive on a theme related to a recent experience involving a "day residue" (to use a psychoanalytic phrase) in an obvious way.

Now all these things have long been known in the study of so-called spontaneous telepathy, in the impressions that are received of people dying, or suffering accidents, or of moments of great excitement or joy. They all involve this. It is not only because the experience is unpleasant that it is fragmented or hidden from us. There seems to be something about the very nature of the process which involves a breaking up and a repetitiousness. It may be due to the fact that, after all, we have to live our lives in terms of the Darwinian principle of the struggle for existence, and it may be that there is much about the telepathic process which would interfere with everyday living. It may be that relying on our sense organs and our muscles in the ordinary adaptive process cannot very well be interrupted for very long or very often by this mysterious unconscious type of telepathic interchange. It may be, then, that what is called symbolism in the case of the telepathic impression, when things do not take the most obvious form, is partly a matter of our really not wanting them to take an obvious form. It may be that we are inviting the apparition to the feast and also pushing it away. One cannot help feeling, as one encounters the supernatural in Shakespeare (for example, take Hamlet's father's ghost, or the curious appearance of Banquo's ghost, or the witches in Macbeth) that the living desperately want commerce with the invisible world, but when they begin to get it, they are afraid of it. One often gets the impression that in these telepathic, or quasi-telepathic phenomena, there is something deep within us that is reaching out and does want to make the contact, but really cannot bear the full impact of it, and so fragments it; then, in a moving tide, it tries to duplicate it and support it. Not able to do this, it finally flounders in the accretion of detail which can never assume the meaningful form of the totality.

Now whether the explanation of symbolism lies solely in this dynamic process, and whether some of it is just a matter of ordinary

human association, I wouldn't pretend to say. I might remind you of the old antithesis that the psychiatrists sometimes like to remind us of between Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud in trying to explain why we lose control of a good deal that one would think normal people would be able to carry out. Why do so many impulsive acts get carried out? Why, I might almost say, do motor automatisms occur so much in relatively normal people?

One hypothesis would be that people are carrying too much baggage. They have too many ideas; they cannot live according to them all at once. One gets distracted and confused. To use a well-worn example, take the little old lady who goes to the supermarket and comes back with too many bundles; she has found bargains on seven different items and she spent only \$4.98, but as she walks along the sidewalk she drops a package, and as she reaches to pick it up, she drops another, and then another. The trouble is that she is not able to hold all this material at once. There are too many packages for her to be able to carry an integrated and tightly unified mass of baggage home with her.

The alternative view would ask whether she did not know, at a deep level, she was buying more than she could cope with? Perhaps she is even proud of herself. Maybe she would be rather pleased if some dapper gentleman were to stop and help her pick up these things. There may have been a motive in this; there may have been a method in her madness. Was it just accident that she got herself overloaded with bundles, or could there have been a purpose in it?

Well, you see, I'm asking the same question. I'm asking whether the fragmentation, duplication, and general confusion of the telepathic image is due essentially to associative factors or whether it is purposive. Is it a matter of the inadequacy of the mind to hold all its contents together under tight control, as Janet would have it, or is it dominated by some implicit purpose, as Freud would say?

I could not help thinking of this in connection with two groups of ideas about symbolism that have been put forward recently. First, we have been vigorously reminded lately by Fraser Nicol (who has been given an assignment by the A.S.P.R. to go through our early publications, particularly those from the days of Dr. J. H. Hyslop, in which vast quantities of carefully sifted material dealing with both spontaneous and mediumistic phenomena were gathered, organized, and interpreted) of Hyslop's ideas about the "pictographic process,"¹⁰ or the tendency of abstract meanings to take on pictorial forms. Ordinarily this would be a

case in which the associative machinery is slightly complicated or in which it may be easier to say a thing in picture language than in abstract terms. We are reminded of the fact that very often the Greeks represented their tremendous Homeric material in the Athenian drama by a series of tableaux, a series of pictures, in which, for example, masked actors came on the stage with little megaphones attached, the lips sticking out. As the actor called out, this gave the effect that he was more than just an actor; he was more even than just a god, though he may have played the part of a god. One might say that he represented an eternal force in pictographic form. Our word "personality" is from "persona" which means mask. It comes from this original activity in which one person personates another.

With this in mind, if one encounters instances in the psychical research literature in which, for example, a deceased person is personated by a living individual, it does not seem so mysterious because we have converging evidences of this common human tendency to personate in both normal and paranormal activity.

Also in connection with the pictographic process, one is reminded of Dr. Ehrenwald's two volumes,^{10, 11} in which we have examples of the intricate and complex dream process by which an event involving the analyst and the patient appears in a beautifully developed pictorial form. Some of this material suggests strongly that it is not just because it is easy to draw pictures, but also that there is a need not to be too explicit, a need to leave something to the imagination, a need to protect oneself against too explicit a transmission of one's message.

Now this idea that the telepathic process involves symbolism—that it is not just a question of getting across a star or a circle or a set of wavy lines—but that it goes off into the dimension in which things are portrayed in the complex language of the dream or the creative artist's fantasy makes one ask if one could actually discover a telepathic process which was meaningful, which was, one might almost say, self-clarifying. Could one avoid this internal self-complication which seems to be almost of the nature of the telepathic process? Now this sounds like a ridiculously simple assignment, but I would like to ask anyone who does any reading in this field to think seriously about this matter and to make a note of any examples, either from spontaneous cases, mediumistic communications, or telepathic experiments, in which the material seems to mold itself into the simplest and most intelligible form.

¹⁰ Jan Ehrenwald, M.D., *Telepathy and Medical Psychology*, W. W. Norton and Company, New York, 1948.

¹¹ ———, *New Dimensions of Deep Analysis: A Study of Telepathy in Interpersonal Relationships*, Grune and Stratton, New York, 1955.

¹² *Life After Death; Problems of the Future Life and Its Nature*, E. P. Dutton & Co., N.Y., 1918, pp. 229-232, 251-254, 264-274.

For example, let us say that a wife wants to convey to her distant husband that their little boy fell down the stairs and broke his leg. If you find any case in which this comes through in *this* way, let us know. I will not say that there are not any in the literature. But I will say that what you will typically find is something that will satisfy you that it is not so very easily interpreted as chance coincidence. To illustrate, in the example just proposed, you will find, let us say, "thirteen bumps," and then vaguely following after that you will find "black and blue." And it suddenly occurs to you, "I know there are thirteen steps and I know that he started falling and that he bump-bumped his way all the way down those steps," and you go back and you count and you think "Why did it have to be shown this way—by thirteen bumps? Why couldn't it simply have been: 'He fell; he went faster and faster down the steps; finally his leg got caught underneath and he broke it?'" We don't find anything like that. It seems to be an intrinsic necessity on the part of the telepathic material to burst upon us in this complex way. Now maybe this is all done by design; maybe it is due to some intrinsic difficulty of our subject matter.

Mrs. Sidgwick, who was one of the great, wise, prophetic figures in this field, wrote a paper almost at the beginning of psychical research on the hindrances in telepathic communication.¹² She made the point that for every one of the cases of simple and direct impressions where a spade is called a spade, there are dozens, scores, maybe hundreds of this more pictographic or symbolic process. Now it may be that this has some other interpretation. But I am just throwing out as a possibility that there is a motive to communicate and a motive not to receive the communication and that, from the point of view of the sender, too, there is a motive to communicate and a motive not to send, and that we are caught somewhere in a limbo, and we are going to have to understand that strange dialogue in which this kind of double-talk forever goes on. We are going to have to understand it and unscramble it, just as we would in the strange dialogue of everyday life where we see two people who seem to be carrying out a normal conversation, but when we overhear it, we are perfectly sure that these two people do not want to be understood. In this case we are perfectly sure that the allegories, the double-talk, serve a function, and this may also apply to telepathic interaction; I don't say this is all there is. I say that these ideas perhaps can be used as supplements to the traditional ideas about motivation and about the openness of the associative surface, the clear surface of the pool.

¹² Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, "On Hindrances and Complications in Telepathic Communication," *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. 34, 1924, pp. 28-69.

Now practically all of this time I have been talking about the person who in the history of the subject has been called the "percipient," the person who is the receiver of the telepathic impression. But what about the sender who is classically known as the agent? Does he have no role? I thought of five possible ways in which we might envisage his role. This is a highly controversial matter.

To begin with, in the Brugmans experiment, you will recall, Brugmans made the remark: "It isn't passive because we pushed his finger." But maybe this is all by-play. Maybe this passive subject, waiting in the brown study, is absorbing everything all of the time, including the push. Maybe he is like blotting paper which catches the ink and the water that oozes in the window from the storm and, at the same time, perspiration from the hand. Maybe the percipient is picking up everything that is there, including the intentions of the experimenter. In other words, it is a reception process still, not an active process on the part of the agent.

Then there is the material of Mrs. Rhine¹³ which is the most extensive of the spontaneous material, literally representing hundreds of cases of spontaneous telepathic interchanges. Mrs. Rhine is heavily underscoring the role of the percipient, making the most out of the ESP function of those people who receive the impression. (In these cases a good many of the impressions are telepathic, some are precognitive, many are clairvoyant, and there may be others of a mixed nature.) But in Mrs. Rhine's material the emphasis is consistently placed on stretching to the utmost the skill of the receiver, like a telegraphic operator who has developed the capacity to take in a couple of hundred clicks of dots and dashes at once. These are people who are able to follow a hundred and fifty clicks after the transmitting instrument has delivered them, just as you and I, as we listen to English, long after the hundreds of phonetic elements which have gone into the sentence, take it in as a single unit. It may well be that the main job, or even the whole job, is done in the by-play of reception and organization in the receiver's mind and that he is willing and able to dramatize an active agent just as part of the game.

In one of the celebrated cases,¹⁴ a Mrs. Severn wakes up from a deep sleep in which she feels a violent blow on the lip. She believes

¹³ L. E. Rhine, "The Relationship of Agent and Percipient in Spontaneous Telepathy," *Journal of Parapsychology*, Vol. 20, 1956, pp. 1-32.

¹⁴ E. Gurney, F. W. H. Myers, F. Podmore, *Phantasms of the Living*, Vol. 1, Trubner & Co., London, 1886, pp. 188-189.

it is bleeding and is surprised to find that it isn't. Later her husband comes in with his lip badly gashed from a boat accident and the time element checks pretty well. When it happened, the husband was not trying to force the idea of the accident into the wife's mind. On the contrary, the wife, so to speak, was reaching out like a searchlight, sweeping along, noting if everything was all right with him, almost like a radar set. Then, encountering something that was not all right, this information takes the form of a particular impression which is partly sensory (the blow on the mouth) and is partly motor (the impulse to do something to get rid of the pain or the blood of this disturbing experience). Maybe the whole thing is really by-play on the part of the receiver. But we have to be cautious about this.

We pass on to the experiments of S. G. Soal of the University of London,¹⁵ and we find that he used no less than thirty different people to act as agents in the case of one highly gifted sensitive, Mrs. Stewart. It looks from the record as if fifteen of these people had the capacity to get telepathic impressions through to this particular subject; the other fifteen didn't. There are some uncertainties about this: some of the agents did not do very much work and we cannot be sure; but it looks as if the process were selective.

Warcollier also reports certain pairs or triads in which A can convey an idea to B or C but not at all to D, E, F, or G. Partly this may be explained by the message being beamed through affection or other close contact, or, as Whately Carington would have it, through the networks of association which are shared by A and B; but it looks also as if perhaps there were a sort of push, a sort of telergy, energy working at a distance. It could even be like psychokinesis as Rhine uses the term: a psychical force producing a material change in the outer environment. It could be something on which you would have to study the agent and the percipient, and it must be admitted that most of our research in this field deals with the percipient. We do not have much information about the agent.

I am inclined to think here that Whately Carington's data rather strongly support the importance of the agent. Remember how I stressed the fact that you work out a set of conditions which are meaningful to the agent and you use the network of associations in the agent's mind. Even this, of course, contains a possible joker because your percipient may be finding his way to the network and the network may be really a completely passive thing at the

time in the mind of the agent. But that seems to ring a little bit hollow and I think we might do better to say for the time being that it looks as if something could be made out for the importance of the agent too. Look at what a lot we still need to know even about the most elementary telepathic phenomena!

Dr. Schneider¹⁶ has stressed the difference between clairvoyance results under various conditions: people trying to help, and people trying to interfere—and has compared these with what has been called "general extrasensory perception" in which both telepathic and clairvoyant modalities may be involved at the same time. The impression may come either from the object chosen or from the mind of the person who is looking at or thinking of that object. To my mind, this does not close these issues but rather tends, on the whole, as most of Schneider's work does, to strengthen the idea of the importance of the experimenter. And if the experimenter is important practically, and the experimenter is often also the person acting as agent, this would support the notion that agent as well as percipient was probably normally at work.

Are we going to be able to make any headway on problems of this order of complexity? I feel rather strongly optimistic about this for two closely related reasons. First, there has been a lot of evidence, spearheaded by Schneider¹⁷ herself in a series of studies done during the war and immediately thereafter, which seems to show that the psychology of normal everyday perception, and the psychology of clairvoyant and telepathic perception, are largely the same. The same distractions which will break up one will break up the other. The same factors which strengthen motivation will raise the scores in one and raise the scores in the other. The same curious Gestalt or form principles, the material at the beginning of the task and at the end of the task, will be especially successful both in normal perception and in extrasensory perception. Cooperation between two or three people all concentrating, or all receiving—the interpersonal aspects—which will be important in some types of normal communication will also be important in some types of paranormal communication. We may be able to carry over into psychical research a lot which experimental psychology has discovered in the last few decades. And as I read the psychological journals in which there is a tremendous amount of new perception work being reported, a great deal of it seems to be quite relevant to these issues I have been putting to you this evening.

I thought I would mention just one type of experiment done

¹⁶ Gertrude R. Schneider, "Are There Two Kinds of Telepathy?" *Journal A.S.P.R.*, Vol. 55, July, 1961, pp. 87-97.

¹⁷ G. Schneider and R. A. McConnell, *ESP and Personality Patterns*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1958.

¹⁵ S. G. Soal and F. Bateman, *Modern Experiments in Telepathy*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1953, pp. 312-314.

by Donald Spence of New York University. He is conducting a brilliant series of experiments which have to do with what is called the "subliminal perception process." There has been endless argument whether it is possible for material that is far too faint to get into consciousness (for example, lights and sounds which are way down, far too faint to be normally seen or heard) nevertheless to influence the course of one's associations, thoughts, and spontaneous imaginations. A rather steady pressure of evidence, making it harder and harder to reject the belief that these subliminal factors do influence the course of thought has been collecting, until we have begun to raise the following type of question which Donald Spence has formulated: Can you determine and predict, in the case of the stimulus far too weak to have any hypothetical effect upon the normal functioning of the sense organs, the course of thought? Can you predict that the course of thought will follow the normal chains of associations as if that stimulus material had been presented in plain sight or plain hearing?

What Spence did in these experiments, for example, was to present a word such as "cheese" at a level of intensity very, very far below any ordinary capacity for perception—this with a quick exposure apparatus set for 1/150th of a second. One might have something to argue about if one presented it in a 50th or 75th, or even 80th, but as for a 150th of a second, enough work has been done in this division of physiological optics to know that under ordinary conditions this just plain does not record, and nobody in all the subjects who took part was able to perceive at a 150th of a second and to connect things up in a reasonable way. I don't know for sure, but I do say that the development of these techniques should be a *challenge* to psychical research, by way of showing how unconscious factors may influence later normal perception and extrasensory perception.

Finally, there is a very considerable possibility that normal and paranormal perception are working together all the time, not separated. Dr. Ehrenwald, Dr. Kahn, and I have been batting this idea around for quite a long while. We like the medical term "potentiation" used so much to indicate the fact that one force, not just by adding itself to another, may create the conditions under which a second force can work, something like catalytic, or, if you like, enzyme action. Or there is the case where you cannot say that oil is the same as steam, but you can say that a well-oiled steam locomotive will go faster than an unoled one. You can say that the oil potentiates the movement of the locomotive which the steam itself basically produces. It may be that the experimental psychology of today which is becoming so much more sophisticated will throw light upon those deeply unconscious

dynamic factors which are perhaps central with regard to telepathic interchanges.

I have not said anything about the usual controls, measurements, safeguards, and elaborations, all of which are a part of normal psychical research. Instead I have intentionally dealt only with this one issue of the *qualitative approach to telepathic phenomena*.

The Menninger Foundation
Topeka, Kansas