

The Discovery of Gifted Sensitives¹

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I

In a certain sense the problem that I am going to present to you tonight—the problem of how to find and cultivate good psychic subjects, sensitives, clairvoyants, people with a gift for paranormal communication—is really the beginning and the center of all psychical research. There are practically no abstractions at all about the nature of telepathy or clairvoyance or precognition, or any of the other phenomena of our field, that hold in a blanket fashion without reference to *individuals*, without reference to those who are capable of spontaneous experiences of contact, let us say, with a loved one at a distance who is in trouble; or with an event which has not yet occurred and which could not have been normally inferred.

The first thing we must do is to ask, *Who* had this experience? The Moslems have a fascinating comment on the European's remark that Mohammed had seizures. The Moslem will say, "Yes, there were seizures; but the important thing is *to whom* the seizures came." And in psychical research the important thing is *to whom* the paranormal experiences come.

A few years ago the A.S.P.R. renewed its efforts to try to find out about the unique aspects of the person involved in an experimental or a spontaneous paranormal experience. We found ourselves grossly inadequate to the task, and I personally feel considerable guilt and considerable blindness with reference to this neglect in developing a sophisticated idea of the individual, the gifted person, and what we may learn by recruiting—finding somewhere and somehow—the gifted person and making the most of that man's or that woman's or that child's peculiar and special gift.

In a certain sense, what I am going to tell you tonight is a fairy tale because it is very hard to believe what actually happened in the life histories of many of the most gifted subjects. If we could encounter today phenomena such as those of Mrs. L. E. Piper or of Mrs. Gladys Osborne Leonard from a half century and more ago, psychical research would leap forward as almost no

¹ This paper is based on a lecture given by Dr. Murphy at a meeting of the Society on January 30, 1968.—Ed.

technical study could advance it. I am therefore going to plunge into an account of some of the actual ways in which psychical researchers, particularly British and American, found and studied and tried to cultivate gifted subjects. Unless we actually see this story in its richness, we will wonder why we fail today and what the differences may be, culturally or personally, between the great pioneers such as William James, who could do this, and ourselves, who are unable to do it. Let us be frank about the situation. There is a great deal in the literature of psychical research about the discovery of highly gifted persons, but we have very little today that we can put on the barrelhead and say that it will indeed help us to identify, study, and make the most of such persons.

And so I come to you tonight with the request that you quite earnestly take us all to task and throw at psychical research a doubly enriched challenge. Of course, you may say "All right, you tell us *we* should be doing it—why aren't *you* doing it?" I can only reply that we do not know the error of logic or of the heart, or of both, which accounts for the fact that we have not in recent years effectively found the kinds of people about whom I am going to talk.

II

I am going to begin with the story of Mrs. Leonore E. Piper (19, 23). Mrs. Piper, married and with two little daughters, had paid some visits to mediums of the period in the Boston area. In 1884 she went to a blind medium named J. R. Cocke for medical advice and received some communications from Mr. Cocke's control, who called himself "Finney." Before very long, Mrs. Piper herself began to fall into a swoon-like or trance-like state; some of her utterances had to do with tragedies occurring to people she knew which could later be verified, and some of them had to do with everyday events in the lives of strangers to whom she was introduced for the purpose of giving sittings.

Now it happened that William James' mother-in-law and sister-in-law had some anonymous sittings in 1885 with this unknown, lonely young woman, and soon thereafter James himself started to sit with Mrs. Piper (9). He was able to establish the fact, first, that there *were* the usual phenomena of suggestibility that were often attributed to psychics in general as identifiably "neuropathic dispositions." For example, there was the fact that a "Frenchman" who called himself Dr. Phinuit—a name so like the "Finney" Mrs. Piper had encountered when sitting with Mr. Cocke—began to give details concerning his life and work. None of these could be verified, nor could Dr. Phinuit speak a word

of French, leading the usual skeptical comments to take sharp and clear form: "These are simply the typical phenomena of auto-suggestion, of trance dissociation, occurring in an otherwise uninteresting person who, because she was lonely and in need of something exciting in her life, fell into this rather silly antic."

But what has this got to do with the fact that first members of the James family, and then William James himself in a long series of sittings, received extraordinary statements about the family history, about matters so personal that even James, with his extraordinary eagerness and directness, hesitated to put the details down in cold print? It was a long and rich and complex story, indicating that in Mrs. Piper there was at least one individual—one "white crow" in all the array of new mediums—who could rather often give brilliantly successful sittings (9).

This soon led to a long series of incognito sittings, starting in 1887, held under the direction of Richard Hodgson, who had just come to this country from England to be Secretary of the newly-formed A.S.P.R. In these sittings many individuals received veridical communications, though there had been no introduction, and there was no evident way for Mrs. Piper to know anything about their personal lives (6, 7). (Hodgson even had Mrs. Piper and her husband shadowed by private detectives for several weeks to find out whether she could have picked up this extraordinary array of information by normal means.) Over the years there were also several successful series of sittings in England (11, 13).

Some of the material emerging during the Piper sittings could be documented in terms of paranormal contact with distant events—events happening to distant living persons; and some could be documented in terms of telepathic contact with those present, as in the following striking example, which occurred during a sitting held in William James' home in New Hampshire in 1889:

Phinuit: "What are these tickets that you have in your pocket? There are figures on them stamped in red, and they are signed with names underneath."

Sitter: "No, I have nothing of the kind in my pocket."

Comment by sitter: "I had forgotten for the moment that I had, earlier in the day, taken two cheques to be cashed, and had thrust them into my inside pocket, folded up. These cheques were endorsed on the back, as described, and were stamped with large and peculiar red numbers . . ."

Phinuit: "Who is this funny-footed fellow of yours, the one with the club-feet and the funny shoes?"

Comment by sitter: "Correct. My boy was born with club-feet, and wears machine boots" (11, pp. 572-573).

Many of the Piper sittings, however, were concerned with messages ostensibly from the deceased, as in the case of the long series of communications received from "G.P." (George Pellew) shortly after Pellew's accidental death (7), or in the case of James H. Hyslop's messages from his deceased father, who had lived on a farm in a remote region of rural Ohio (8). In this latter case in particular, it is difficult to see how normal sources of information could have been available to Mrs. Piper.

It might be well to stress, at this point that we have no good evidence of a *training process* running through the excellent work of Mrs. Piper; quite the contrary, her mediumistic gifts seemed to appear suddenly, like a bolt from the blue. Nor do we have many examples of the arduous, grilling, and systematic "education" that Mrs. Eileen Garrett underwent at the British College of Psychic Science with Hewat McKenzie (5), both of them being willing to make enormous sacrifices of time and energy to bring her to the maximal extent of her powers. Actually, we have very few systematic studies on the cultivation of paranormal sensitivity and, as John Beloff has recently pointed out (3), we do not yet know whether there are any specific training techniques which would enable the ordinary person to acquire such sensitivity. Milan Ryzl, the Czech investigator, described a method² for creating gifted subjects (21, 22), and he apparently used it successfully, notably with the star subject, Pavel Stepanek. But independent attempts to validate the method have not been successful (see, e.g., 3, pp. 125-126) and one remains doubtful of its general applicability. Thus the question of "training" versus "native gift" (or their interrelations) cannot now be answered, and we must await the results of further research.

To return to Mrs. Piper, how was she "recruited"? She was recruited through the American spiritualist movement. If William James had been afraid to make contact with this type of movement, a very important period in the history of psychical research would have been lost to us. Mrs. Piper went on quietly giving sittings for many years. She never sought any publicity, did not read the published material regarding her work, which was turned out in large quantities, and was even quite vague as to the nature of the research going on and as to the meaning of her own phenomena.

² W. G. Roll (20) has pointed out the similarity of Ryzl's method, which involves the use of hypnosis to develop the clarity of the subject's imagery, to one described more than forty years ago by Gustav Pagenstecher (17) in his monograph on the famous psychometric subject, Señora Maria Reyes de Z. (Mrs. Zierold). However, unlike Ryzl, Pagenstecher did not claim that his method would be useful in developing ESP in the ordinary person.

III

At the turn of the century a group of classical scholars in England, including Frederic W. H. Myers, began to think about the kind of evidence that would be contributed if classical material came through a sensitive who knew "small Latin and less Greek"; that is, if scholarly messages were woven into the usual trance communications. They felt that material of this sort would advance our understanding of trance psychology and also plumb the deeper, more serious claims of contact with the deceased. I will give you an illustration:

Mrs. Piper was one of a group of seven automatic writers—persons capable of throwing themselves into a light trance or dissociated state in which the hand moves more or less of its own accord. Both in trance, when she wrote automatically, and as she came out of trance (delivering a few words in the "waking stage" before she was fully returned to this world), she began to give classical references to sources so abstruse that neither the sitters nor the other classical scholars who studied the scripts could identify the material, and frequently believed that she had failed. In point of fact, long strings of quite specific and successful material were delivered both before the death of Myers, and in particular after his death, in very "Myers-like" types of communications (24). In a series of sittings, for example, material was delivered by Mrs. Piper from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, having to do with the journey to the river Styx and beyond, on the basis of the question, "What does the word *Lethe* suggest to you?" (15, pp. 214-224; 18). Very appropriate classical references were given to the river *Lethe*—the river of forgetfulness in the underworld—and the related characters with their Greek names coming and going in the midst of this narrative. But the most extraordinary thing about this was that, as time went on, dovetailing quotations from similar classics began to appear in the writings of the other automatists. Communications of this kind came to be known as "cross correspondences," in the sense that interwoven fragments of basic classical messages, quite appropriate as coming from Myers and others in the S.P.R. group of communicators, were produced month after month and indeed year after year by the automatists.

I have already described how Mrs. Piper was recruited. How about the other automatists who were involved in the production of the cross correspondences? How were they recruited? Did someone advertise in the *Athenaeum* for them? Were they talked about in the Cambridge lecture halls? Far from it. It started from the fact that the classicists themselves, being well educated and

thoughtful men and women, had the opportunity to see at first hand the nature of the trance phenomena of Mrs. Piper, and the thing spread.

For example, Margaret Verrall, the wife of a professor of classics and herself lecturer in classics at Newnham College, Cambridge, gave herself the assignment, at about the turn of the century, of learning how to do automatic writing (31). You will see now why I think this historical record has some relevance to tonight's topic. Mrs. Verrall, an ordinary, thoughtful person with no outstanding psychic gifts that were apparent, sat regularly to see if her hand would move. It finally did, but the curious thing is that it didn't move the way Mrs. Piper's hand moved, in deep trance; in fact, Mrs. Verrall did not go into deep trance. As she herself describes it (31), what usually happened was that one word at a time would drop into her mind and she would write down what she "heard." And before very long, the classical allusions which appeared in Mrs. Verrall's script began to interweave with the messages of Mrs. Piper and the other automatists in the group. Shortly after the death of Myers, Mrs. Holland (Rudyard Kipling's sister) in India began to make references in her automatic script to "5 Selwyn Gardens, Cambridge." Mrs. Verrall's address, a fact unknown to Mrs. Holland. Myers, purporting to communicate through Mrs. Holland, urged that she send her script to Mrs. Verrall. This she did, and the resulting association between these two automatists gave rise to many cross correspondences (10; 24, p. 46).

Before very long, then, a web or texture of communications began to develop which was so rich in classical allusions and so complex in design that people could not help asking the question: "If Myers, having died at the turn of the century, wanted to make his continued existence credible, what would he do?" He might very well plunk little fragments of messages, which could not easily be fitted together, into the minds of different sensitives, some of them classical and some of them non-classical in their education.

IV

In the cross correspondences, the recruitment of subjects was largely a matter of the investigators' courage in becoming their own subjects. And this is a theme of which C. J. Ducasse has often reminded us: the responsibility of all serious investigators to see how far they themselves can go in the expression of the paranormal. This is reminiscent of a principle used in India, for example, in teaching four hundred-odd million people other

languages than their own vernacular, many of them wishing, for good economic reasons, to learn English. This principle is "each one teach one"; each person with a little knowledge of the language passes it along to relative, friend, or neighbor. Similarly, a person with a little psychic gift, pushing it with normal common sense, not making a fetish out of it nor becoming unduly excited about it, may through encouragement and support help to develop a similar capacity in others.

A skeptical friend of mine had been reading the cross correspondence material because I had told him that as a civilized person with scientific pretensions he ought to know something about psychical research. He was drowsy that afternoon; he put a pencil between his thumb and finger and dozed off. Then the telephone rang and he was annoyed at being interrupted in his nap. As he answered the phone he looked down at the pad, and on the sheet was written "I hear the bell." He wasn't sure he was going to have anything to do with automatic writing, but in the very midst of this self-induced state it was starting! And very often automatic writing, in one form or another, starts and goes on as far as it is allowed to go. Now, I hasten to agree that it can easily go too far. It can lead a somewhat vulnerable person into developing a form of dissociation which he cannot control. There is some risk. But this is true of a great many things. It is true of drug research, of experimentation with LSD, for example, but we don't stop all research because of the dangers involved.

Now, what I have been saying so far might be called the cultivation of the "in" group; that is to say, not looking upon psychics or sensitives as "those sorts of people out there"—across the East River or on the other side of the Hudson. It is thinking of psychic phenomena as "common human" and belonging in some vestige at least to all human beings and capable of being much more vividly expressed at some times than at others—notably in periods of shock, grief, or alienation—when one may, like Mrs. Piper, be in need of something "out there." And there is also the need for the perfectly normal kind of mutual support which men and women are going to demand if they take up a subject like psychical research which does not chime in well with the *Zeitgeist*, with the dominant mood or thought of the period.

In this connection, it must be pointed out that a good deal has been learned by following prototypes which have been set up in the spontaneously occurring religious experiences of mankind. It is true of India, it is true of the Middle East, it is true of the Catholic and Protestant and Jewish worlds of the west, that wherever the individual has a strong conviction that he is coming nearer the Divine through the cultivation of automatic ways of

expression—through speech or writing, or even through dreams—there is likely to be a greater richness and spontaneity in the phenomena than when one takes the hard-boiled point of view that this is science and not religion. The empirical fact is that the disposition to regard these expressions as, in a certain sense, divine has been one of the historical reasons for their effective development.

V

It seems to me that the cultivation of the paranormal gift is not unlike the cultivation of almost any other kind of gift, whether profound or ridiculous—whether learning to play Bach fugues on the piano or learning to wiggle one's ears. It makes no difference so far as the psychology of learning is concerned: it takes motivation, persistence, and a great deal of blind pushing when you just plain don't know how. Suppose I were to tell you, for example, that you can, typically, produce a particular kind of brain wave which you have perhaps only heard of in a vague sort of way. And I say that just as *some* of you could learn to write, if not great, then at least very passable lyric poetry, just so *some* of you could learn to control your brain waves. What do you have to do? You have to have an electronic panel by which the brain waves that are coming all the time from the surface of the brain are magnified and connected to auditory or visual signals (as on a television screen). You look or listen; you see your own brain waves as they are conducted to the screen, or hear the tone that results when your alpha waves are coming. And you try to control them. How do you do this? Well, you simply keep on wishing until it happens, very much as Mrs. Verrall kept on wishing to write automatically, until it finally happened. This sort of thing may be called "self-reinforced" activity. You don't have to give people candy bars to reward them; you don't have to pat them on the shoulder and tell them they are doing a wonderful job. If they are highly motivated to succeed, they will pick up little internal cues from the body, perhaps from the vital organs or the muscles which will begin to tighten in a particular way. Or, instead of controlling your brain waves or wiggling your ears, you might be writing automatically. And you might even write, as Mrs. Verrall did, and as Mrs. Piper did at a different level, some quite interesting and coherent stuff.

Now, it must be stressed that the production of an automatic phenomenon is not in itself important. It is merely a vehicle by means of which the paranormal may or may not be expressed. An automatic script, for example, is no more significant that it

would be if I were to tell you that there is a boat drifting by itself near the coast. How good a boat, how useful a boat, how difficult it will be to rescue the crew—we don't know. The question is not whether you can produce an automatism—the chances are that many of you can. The question is whether the automatism becomes a *useful vehicle* for veridical messages. There is a great deal of story-telling in the sphere of automatism. But the material might contain, as Mrs. Verrall's writing did and as Mrs. Piper's writing did over and over again and year after year, messages having to do with distant and not otherwise known events, or having to do with a clear-cut telepathic line of communication with a distant individual or even having to do with seeming communication between the living and the deceased.

In the perspective of seventy-five years and more of psychical research, most of us, I think, incline toward the view that the motor phenomena, like automatic writing or speech, are in the long run less revealing for most people, most of the time, than the messages that appear at the perceptual level or the cognitive level. These sensory automatisms, as they are called, have to do with *impressions*: you may, as you fall asleep, have an hypnagogic impression, or, as you awake in the morning, an hypnapompic impression. Or, as you wake fitfully in the middle of the night, you may have an experience which is neither quite a dream nor a waking hallucination. These perceptual phenomena or cognitive phenomena have to do with the world of contact with the outer environment, not with motor effects; sometimes they also may be vehicles for the expression of the paranormal. I believe that in the long run we have learned most about the paranormal from the direct psychological study of perceptual and cognitive states, and that the motor phenomena are useful and interesting mostly as secondary indications of what the perceptual and cognitive processes are. At any rate, I will give you my biases and a few concrete cases of veridical sensory automatisms:

Early in the present century two English women, Miss Miles and Miss Ramsden, carried out a series of telepathy tests in which items that Miss Miles concentrated upon during the day appeared in the impressions received by Miss Ramsden (14). For example, when the former selected as "target" *Bishop of Bristol*, the latter recorded as her impression for that day *Bishop Latimer, Archbishop*. The two Miles-Ramsden series of 1905 and 1907 provide a good illustration of the capacity of two people who are in close attunement with each other to develop a type of paranormal sharing. Their results are not of a sort easy to put on a quantitative basis, yet they are so striking that one cannot help feeling that there was real telepathic communication involved.

Another aspect of the problem is highlighted by the experiments of the English writer Hubert Wales, who was skeptical whether successful telepathic communication required any special "attunement" between the persons involved, or concentration on the part of the agent (32). One of Wales' newspaper articles on psychical research had been read by a woman in a photography shop in London, Miss Samuels, who corresponded with Wales and agreed to his suggestion that she should write down her impressions as to what he was doing at different times during the day as he moved around in different areas. Some of Miss Samuels' imagery related rather strikingly to Wales' activities. Wales called this "telepathy without conscious agency" as he was not thinking about Miss Samuels, whom he barely knew, nor concentrating on the events to which her impressions seemed to refer.

Thus, we may have either conscious agency in sending (as in the Miles-Ramsden series), or unconscious agency (as in the Wales experiments); and also unconscious percipience (as in the case of those to whom spontaneous impressions concerning distant events or persons come unsought). We are led back by cases like these to the notion that perhaps we are dealing with an almost trance-like state, or at least a state of great plasticity, great openness, like the state of creativeness which so many composers and painters have told us about. Here there is no effort to make something new, but rather a capacity to perceive in an unusual way that is not voluntarily controllable. So, in our efforts to recruit, what we are trying to find is a person who is capable of developing that kind of deep relaxation, so often near the sleeping state, in which impressions come, form themselves, and can be remembered and recorded.

VI

I said a minute ago that the perceptual and the cognitive phenomena are usually worth more than the purely motor phenomena. I would like to give an illustration of a fact that we learned in the very beginning, when Myers was formulating his theory of the subliminal self (16)^{*}, that kind of consciousness which is deeper than consciousness. Myers differentiated here between the motor automatisms and the sensory automatisms, and he gave close attention to the field of sensory automatisms. You have, for example, the almost universal habit among preliterate peoples of using a pool of water, a drop of blood, or some other shimmering, liquid

^{*} See also Myers' *Human Personality* (London: Longmans, Green, 1903), Vol. I, Ch. 6, "Sensory Automatism," and Vol. II, Ch. 8, "Motor Automatism."

surface which, as you gaze at it, will begin to reflect, glaze over, and seem to show images. The same thing will happen if you use a crystal ball or any other kind of shiny surface. But the interesting thing is that these surface reflections, one sees on the crystal ball are not the thing out of which the clairvoyant impression is formed. Typically, what happens as one looks at the ball is that the surface "mists over," becomes foggy, and then an etched image begins to stand out.

Now these crystal visions may have some paranormal content, as in the case of some celebrated subjects that were early studied in this field (4), or they may be nothing more than vehicles for free associations. But why do we have so many people who have monkeyed with automatic writing and so few who have monkeyed with crystal gazing? We laugh at crystal gazing. Perhaps we are a little embarrassed at anything so public as committing ourselves to the utterance of what we see in a surface which mists over and begins to form images. Actually, there are dozens of devices that can be used. And the auditory sphere is probably just as good. The dull, roaring sound one hears when holding a conch shell to the ear will do quite well. All these devices are very rich in offering materials to be restructured. I think that out of every attempt to get people interested in "psychic parlor games," at least a few minutes or a half hour should be given to sensory automatisms, which provide an opportunity to see whether one can get a little bit below the surface impression.

Of course, these phenomena, these sensory and motor automatisms, are fleeting and evanescent. They have to be caught, they have to be trapped; and you have to stay with them. And I would be the first to agree that unless you have considerable self-discipline and considerable sympathy with all kinds of people who will bring all sorts of different human motivations to tests such as these, you will run through a few weeks of work and then the thing will peter out.

VII

Now, I have already spoken about the use of the "stray" medium, Mrs. Piper, and about the use of the "in" group—the investigators themselves becoming the subjects, which was the way many of the great subjects in the early British period came to light. I will now go on to another slightly different angle involving some of these same things, but also something more—the case of two very extraordinary British mediums, Mrs. Willett and Mrs. Osborne Leonard, who were, so to speak, "fair game" for psychical researchers. Mrs. Leonard wrote her autobiography (12) and you can see

the "recruitment" process here. You can see how she gave inquirers into psychical phenomena an unusual opportunity to get, through her mediumship, especially clear and vivid communications regarding both the living and the deceased. And with Mrs. Leonard we have something quite similar to what obtained in the case of Mrs. Piper—a willingness to commit herself to "blind" sittings and to experiments scheduled weeks and months in advance. Mrs. Lydia Allison of our A.S.P.R. group arranged for proxy sittings with Mrs. Leonard, and you will find in her book, *Leonard and Soule Experiments* (1), some remarkable examples of the capacity to pluck something interesting out of the midst of a long and complicated context.

The thing that is particularly striking about Mrs. Leonard's work from the point of view of recruitment is the eagerness with which a special elite group of investigators began to gather around her, like bees around clover, filling up her time as far as possible with research sittings. These research sittings differed from Mrs. Leonard's ordinary bereavement-assuaging sittings, which usually had very much less careful recording and documentation and a lower level of scientific importance.

In Mrs. Leonard's case, one may say that the boat was missed by the investigators almost as seriously as it was in Mrs. Piper's case, in the sense that after these long and devoted careers came to an end there was little that emerged in the way of scientific principles. The chief result of all this intensive study was merely a reaffirmation of the reality that William James had pointed out at the very beginning—the reality of paranormal communication, some of which could very well have been a form of communication with the deceased.

In the case of Mrs. Willett, we have almost the embodiment of a special difficulty that besets psychical research. The more gifted the individual is, the greater the difficulties are in studying this individual at face value. Mrs. Willett, who was quite prominent in British public affairs, went through her life and died without her involvement in psychical research ever being known except to the inner circle of the S.P.R. It was only long after her death that her real name was published. We have a whole series of cultural forces standing in the way, and even G. W. Balfour in his beautiful study of Mrs. Willett's powers (2) never really spelled out the kind of information about her life and achievements which would make possible a systematic scientific study. Thus we have a good deal of evidence by now, on both sides of the Atlantic, that quite a lot of real sensitivity is being excluded from serious study by one or another type of social fear, a fear that perhaps one will be derided or regarded as deranged.

We have a recent example of such difficulties in the case of Bishop Pike who, because of his willingness to report on his sittings with Arthur Ford, has had a good deal of unfavorable publicity. Several newspaper reporters consulted me regarding Bishop Pike's beliefs, on the assumption that their readers would need to know whether this proved that he had had a "nervous breakdown." In other words, we are still at the point where relatively few people have the courage to become publicly identified with investigations which are so open-ended and regarding the meaning of which the public has so much basic doubt.

VIII

To return to the question of finding gifted subjects, how can we tell whether we have recruited successfully or not? The proof of the pudding is in the eating. How do we know that we have found the best? The British have always used the rule, Try everyone. Let us assume that people who have had one spontaneous experience of telepathy, clairvoyance, or precognition are likely to have more if the same conditions can be established, or if they well up spontaneously within the individual. It may be possible, then, to cull out from those who have had the best spontaneous experiences those most suitable for more intensive studies.

But even without the benefit of spontaneous cases, one may begin with some very simple and unpretentious experiments. One may form a group that meets regularly in which a few elements of sound experimental procedure are developed and some serious consecutive effort over a number of months is maintained. You are likely to find, typically, two or three rather promising people in a group of twenty or so. The problem is very largely one of maintaining the motivation, which in turn is very largely a problem of realizing that wherever there is a little bit of good grain there is bound to be a lot of chaff. It will take a great deal of patience in accumulating, sifting, recording, and ultimately publishing the material before anything very much is going to be learned. The criterion, then, is a rather severe level of scientific interest in the phenomena.

I want to turn now to a different type of recruitment—the recruitment of students as subjects. This can mean elementary school or high school or college students. This has been done a good many times. Gertrude Schmeidler started in with college students in her Harvard studies in 1942 (25, 26), and has continued this work since coming to New York (28). Many other studies

of college classes have been carried out in the hope that we might find gifted subjects in this way. I think I ought to add, however, for reasons which need to be looked into closely, that college student groups tested by the use of ESP cards, or any other simple, scorable material, don't usually yield much by way of highly gifted subjects. In all the years that Dr. Schmeidler and many other investigators have been doing college screening of this sort, I have never seen a consistently high-scoring subject pop up.

In this connection, I want to make the point that the atmosphere of college classes, particularly psychology classes, is really basically rigged *against* getting results. With all the falderal, with all the machinery you have to set up to do decently controlled ESP tests, the assumption is, "Oh, if anything should ever happen in this class, what would we *do*? Where would we be if somebody scored 22 out of 25, first crack out of the box, under conditions which we said were watertight? We would have to *explain* for months!" I think this sort of fear lurks in the background. Moreover, I think that college age is the wrong age for good ESP subjects. I think that one does better in early adolescence than in late. I don't know why we don't do more with high school students. I don't know why we don't do more with elementary school students.

Then there is another thing which makes it difficult to do adequate searching and screening of ESP subjects. We don't go quite far enough in providing bins into which to drop good data. Very often experimental results occur that we aren't ready for, and we decide *after the event* to check the data in new ways. One may find, for example, that although there are only the number of direct hits that would be expected by chance, the subject has tended to score on the target just before or just after the one he was aiming at. Now, if one sets up an hypothesis *in advance* that an effect like this is going to occur, then it is quite proper to score it. But to allow oneself a retrospective way of looking at the data, and then treating them as if the hypothesis had been set up to be tested, is not cricket. Odd effects will frequently occur, and all sorts of idiosyncratic and interesting possibilities must be provided for in advance.

If we know, for example, something about the psychology of our subjects, then we can predict the kind of effects they are likely to produce in an ESP test. The best illustration of this that I can think of is Gertrude Schmeidler's studies of the temperament of her subjects in which she undertakes to show, by means of projective tests such as the Rorschach, the kind of scoring patterns that are likely to appear (28, Ch. 7); or better yet, the interactions between members of the subject-agent pairs (27). When he was at Stanford, Charles E. Stuart did similar experiments

(30), and both his studies and Schmeidler's studies seem to suggest that a gifted subject is not just a gifted subject as such, but rather that he or she is gifted in terms of communication with a particular person.

When S. G. Soal made his studies of the highly gifted subjects that he used, he found that not all agents were able to send to them (29). He worked, as you will remember, with Basil Shackleton and with Gloria Stewart, and he found that by no means all the people in paired experimental teams succeeded in getting significant results with them. On the contrary, the kind of gift that appeared was the ability of A to communicate with B, or of C to communicate with D. And it is often in the special pairs that the gift lies. We are making a serious psychological error if we fail to realize that the paranormal involves a *relationship* between persons; it is not like a birthmark on the skin, an inseparable part of a unitary individual. Much more, paranormal communication is like a system of communication through tones or paints in which what is meaningful for a particular creator is also meaningful for a particular listener or a particular observer. Some of the things that Beethoven had to say may not mean anything to you, but this is nothing against Beethoven; nor is it anything against your possible enjoyment of Mozart or Bach. In other fields, we all recognize that there are idiosyncrasies and special gifts.

IX

Now, why don't we make the most of this in psychical research? Why don't we constantly try to investigate the *interpersonal* aspects of paranormal phenomena? This can be done in your own private group that meets on alternate Wednesdays to try out some telepathic or clairvoyant exchange; it can be done in the class that you teach, and quite as effectively with little tots as with college students. And right around the corner there may well be other creative possibilities that we haven't even begun to think about. It may be on the "each one teach one" basis that there is a little spark in you or in a member of your family which will generate a fire only if it is provided with appropriate tinder.

I have tried to keep this on the conservative side. I don't say that anyone you recruit is going to develop a Piper type of spectacular phenomena, or a Leonard type. I am saying, however, that there is such a thing as successful recruitment of persons with modest gifts. You can't tell how much is there until you have tried; it takes starting from where you are. It means, for example, taking whatever spontaneous experiences you and your

family and friends have had and looking for dyadic relations—that is, person-to-person relations. And it means the hard work of writing down the experiences and keeping systematic records.

Now, I don't want to create the impression that recruiting the subject is a first step unrelated to the next step, which is trying to cultivate the subject's gifts. The more I look at it, the more I am convinced that the recruitment process *in itself* provides a kind of "training." The way in which you listen to the first account of a spontaneous experience—whether you kill the thing by the severity of the treatment you give this account, or whether you encourage it; what you do that will maintain a high scientific level and yet at the same time loosen up and lead on the individual or the pair or the group to communicate—these in themselves may be the first steps in the cultivation process.

Side by side with the cultivation of paranormal powers goes the study of the psychology of learning; practicing; making careful records; watching what you can do now that you couldn't do last week; making note of the dyadic relations between persons in the development of group morale; and, above all, as C. J. Ducasse has often reminded us, developing a capacity to share in the teamwork. This includes a capacity on the part of each man or woman who is interested in psychical research to communicate to others where the real difficulties lie and where the most promising lines for progress seem to be forming. All I can do is to give you a little bit about the historical background, a little bit about the difficulties, and a little bit about the encouragements. But the main job of discovering gifted subjects and making the most of what they can offer to psychical research lies in the hands of people like yourselves who are interested and willing to give the time and energy to carrying out this theme.

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