

H. H. PRICE

Professor Emeritus, University of Oxford

THE PROBLEM OF LIFE AFTER DEATH

May I first say, Mr Chairman,¹ that I regard it as a great honour to have been invited to take part in this Conference? I speak to you as a philosopher who happens to be interested both in religion and in psychical research (like the Neoplatonists long ago). But I am afraid I am going to discuss some questions which it is 'not done' to talk about.

Some of you may have heard a story about Frederick Myers, the most celebrated, perhaps, of all psychical researchers. At a dinner party he asked his neighbour 'What do you think will happen to you after death?' The reply was 'Oh, I suppose I shall inherit eternal bliss; but I do wish you would not talk about such a depressing subject'. The modern reply to such an inquiry would be rather different. Nowadays the subject of life after death is not merely a depressing one. It is something worse. It is a topic which arouses such strong and uncomfortable emotions that we prefer not to mention it at all. Therefore I address you this afternoon with no little fear and trembling. I am going to talk about what psychical researchers call 'the Problem of Survival'.

In the past 80 years or so, a good deal of evidence has accumulated which is relevant to this problem. Most of it comes from mediumistic communications. Some apparitional phenomena may be relevant as well, and also some of the strange experiences which psychical researchers call 'out-of-the-body experiences'. But I shall talk mainly about mediumistic communications. I shall not say anything about *physical* mediumship, in which such phenomena as telekinesis and materialisation purport to occur. I shall only talk about *mental* mediumship, the sort in which verbal communications are given, either orally or in the form of automatic writing. These communications can be divided roughly into two kinds. First, there are those which claim to give us evidence for survival, that is, for the continued existence of human personality after bodily death. And secondly, there are those which claim to give us descriptions of 'the other world' (or worlds) in which surviving personalities are alleged to live. Both sorts of communications raise problems which are relevant to the philosophy of religion. And the second sort, the descriptive ones, are very unwelcome to many religious people. If I have

¹ This paper was first read to a meeting of The Society for the Study of Theology at a conference at Nottingham in April 1967, with Professor H. D. Lewis in the Chair.

time to say anything about them in this paper or in the discussion afterwards, my fear and trembling will be greater than ever. But obviously one must consider the evidential communications first, because you might very well ask why we should pay any attention to mediumistic communications at all.

EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTIONS

In order to understand what is happening in the very strange phenomena of mental mediumship one must first consider what is called 'extra-sensory perception' (ESP for short)—telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and retrocognition. Extra-sensory perception is the best-established of all paranormal phenomena. I confess I don't think it is really very like perception, and should prefer the more non-committal phrase 'paranormal cognition'. But the term ESP is now so familiar that I shall go on using it.

It has not been possible, so far, to explain ESP by any kind of radiation hypothesis, and I doubt whether it ever will be possible unless we first modify our views of physical space and time in a pretty drastic manner.

We can however say a little about the psychology of ESP. There seem to be two distinguishable stages in the ESP process. The first may be called 'reception' and the second 'emergence'. It would seem that ESP impressions are first received at an *unconscious* level of the subject's mind, and that some sort of barrier or censorship has to be surmounted or circumvented before they can emerge into consciousness. Consequently, they often emerge 'in an oblique manner' as my SPR colleague Mrs. Rosalind Heywood has put it. The paranormally-acquired information may only manage to 'get through' in a symbolic form. Or it itself does not get through, though some idea closely associated with it does. Or it is mixed in among other items which have a normal as opposed to a paranormal origin (as a traveller might elude the vigilance of the customs officials by mixing in some prohibited articles among a lot of other innocent ones). Or again, the paranormally acquired bit of information manages to slip into the margin of consciousness but not into the focus, and therefore is easily overlooked and quickly forgotten. Sometimes, again, it emerges in the form of bodily behaviour, as in automatic writing or the semi-automatic speech which occurs in some forms of the mediumistic trance. If as we manage to solve the problem of bringing our ESP powers under voluntary control (for I suspect that we all have them in some degree) I think we shall have to do it by 'smoothing the passage', as it were, between the unconscious level of our personalities and the conscious level. The curious practices which diviners and other psychic persons in all ages have used were probably designed for this purpose and may not be quite so silly as they look.

I hope that these sketchy remarks about the nature of ESP, and especially about its two-stage character (first unconscious reception and then emergence)

may throw some light on the difficult problems which we now have to discuss.

CONTROLS AND COMMUNICATORS

The phenomena of mental mediumship are both puzzling and complex. They also vary considerably from one medium to another; for instance, some go into a deep trance, while others are only in a slightly dissociated state, not very far removed from normal waking consciousness.

But most trance mediums purport to have a 'controlling spirit', usually called 'a control' for short, and some have more than one. It is important to distinguish between the control on the one hand, and the communicators on the other. The control is a kind of master of ceremonies, whose function is to introduce the communicators and to look after the medium. It is his task to open the séance and to bring it to an end when the medium has had enough. The control usually claims to be the 'spirit' of a deceased human being, but seldom or never gives much evidence to support this claim. It seems very likely that the control is a secondary personality of the medium herself, some part or stratum of her personality which is repressed in waking life. Word-association tests give some support to this view. It may also be significant that controls sometimes give themselves high sounding foreign names (Mrs Garrett for example has two: Urani and Abdul Latif) and that they sometimes have a rather childish character, for example Mrs Leonard's control Fedá.

The mediumistic evidence for survival, whatever weight you may attach to it, is provided by the communicators and not by the control, who seems to be just a psychologically-helpful part of the machinery of communication.

Next we must notice that the communicators present themselves in two quite different ways. Usually the medium claims to be seeing them or listening to them. She describes what they look like, and then passes on the information which they give her. She says 'he is showing me such and such a thing' or 'he is telling me so and so'. But with some mediums the communicators occasionally takes a more dramatic form, sometimes called 'the direct voice'. It is as if the medium were *possessed* by an alien personality quite different from her normal one, who is somehow able to use her body and speak through her lips. There may even be a succession of such alien personalities. Each possesses the medium's body for a time and then gives way to another quite different one.

I myself have witnessed this phenomenon only once (the medium in this case was male, a Mr Flint). I will mention two of these 'possessing' personalities. The first announced that he had been a London street-Arab in earthly life. He then proceeded to give a long theological discourse, uttered with almost incredible rapidity. It was an exposition of Adoptionist Christology,

exceedingly fluent but not at all convincing. I think I have never listened to a more boring sermon in my life.

Then another quite different personality took over, and for some reason he took a special interest in me. At any rate, he walked over to the place where I was sitting and had a short conversation with me. I say 'he' did so, because that was how it felt at the time. Though the physical organism which walked across the room was of course the medium's own, and the lips through which the words came were his, it never struck me at the time that the person talking to me was Mr Flint himself. On the contrary, it was like meeting a rather friendly stranger whom one had never met before. The first thing he said to me was 'You know, some of your theories are quite wrong'. I replied that this might well be true. Then he said 'your spectacles are broken'. I opened my spectacle case and showed him that they were not. But an hour or so later, while I was waiting for my train at Paddington, I happened to meet an Oxford colleague of mine, who told me that he had broken *his* spectacles. He was much concerned about it, and on the way back to Oxford we spent a considerable time trying to repair them with pipe-cleaners.

I mention this to show how very life-like these 'possessing' personalities can be and how they can apparently have telepathic or precognitive capacities. For though my own spectacles were not broken, a quite unexpected incident concerning broken spectacles did happen to me shortly afterwards. But however impressive this 'possessive' type of mediumship can be, just as a phenomenon, from the *evidential* point of view it is neither better nor worse than the more usual type, in which the medium merely claims to be passing on what he or she has been told (or shown) by the communicator. From the evidential point of view, the crucial question is just this: do we ever find, in either sort of communication, that verifiable information is given concerning the earthly life of the alleged communicator, information which is sufficient to identify him with a particular deceased human being?

But first we must make sure that the medium could not have acquired the information in any normal manner (for instance by looking up an old copy of *Who's Who*). We must also make sure that the sitters do not give anything away, either orally or otherwise. For example, it would be unfortunate if one of them were wearing widow's weeds. To avoid such difficulties, we can make use of 'proxy' sitters who were not personally acquainted with the deceased person. Or again, if someone is 'booking' a sitting with a medium, he himself can give an assumed name instead of his real one.

But even though verifiable information is quite often given concerning the earthly career of a particular deceased person, and even though we can often be sure that the medium has not acquired this information in any normal manner, might she not have acquired it by means of her own powers

of extra-sensory perception? Some paranormal hypothesis seems to be needed, if we are to explain the facts. But need it be the survival hypothesis? This is the most important question we have to ask when we consider the phenomena of mental mediumship, and it is a very difficult question indeed.

To show how difficult it is, I shall make a few remarks about a celebrated case, called the Edgar Vandy case. You will find a full account of it in Professor C. D. Broad's *Lectures on Psychical Research* ch. 15, and a briefer and more popular one in a recent book by Mr Andrew Mackenzie called *The Unexplained*, Ch. 11.

THE EDGAR VANDY CASE

A young man called Edgar Vandy died in a drowning accident in August 1933. It was not clear how exactly the accident had happened. So his brother George Vandy had a number of sittings with several mediums in the hope of finding out. (When he arranged the sittings he gave himself a false name and also a false address.) The mystery was never completely cleared up, but some interesting information was given. For instance, at one of the sittings the medium said 'I get the letter H. He is wearing something belonging to your brother who has passed over'. She added 'He (the communicator) is persistent about it. Check it up'. So George Vandy did so; and it turned out that another brother, Harold Vandy, had inadvertently taken and worn Edgar's hat a day or two after Edgar's death.

On another occasion, the medium said that Edgar was showing her a cigarette case, and added 'And that's funny, because he did not smoke'. It was true that Edgar did not smoke, and therefore it seemed very unlikely that he possessed a cigarette case. But the medium gave directions about the place where the cigarette case was. A search was made in the place she described (a certain chest of drawers) and right at the bottom of a drawer, underneath some folded clothes, there was 'a new aluminium box which when held in the hand looked exactly like a metal cigarette case'.

We do have to admit that verifiable information is quite often given in such communications, and we do have to admit (as in the Vandy case which I have just quoted) that it is quite often information which the medium could not have acquired in any normal manner.

How are we to explain such communications? The Survival Hypothesis is one way of explaining them. If the personality of Edgar Vandy did continue to exist after his death he might have found out about the hat in some telepathic or clairvoyant manner, and he might remember about the aluminium box at the bottom of the drawer. He also gave particulars about a drawing of a complicated machine designed by himself, which the medium could not understand at all. If he did survive death, he might be expected to remember about this too.

As I have said, the mystery about his death was never completely cleared up, though several different mediums were consulted. But in a way this apparent failure is consistent with the survival hypothesis and even supports it. At one of the earlier sittings the medium had said 'He is not terribly keen on this enquiry, He does not want you to enquire too closely into the cause of his death'. At a later sitting the medium said 'He was not alone—there was somebody near him who swam away and did not want to help him.' And according to the medium, Edgar added 'I do not altogether blame him'. This suggests that the surviving personality of Edgar Vandy *was* communicating and was trying to shield this other person and save him from getting into trouble.

THE SUPER-ESP HYPOTHESIS

But there is an alternative hypothesis. It is sometimes called the Super-ESP hypothesis. A medium, on this view, is not a person who is capable of getting in touch with inhabitants of another world. She is a person who has very extensive powers of extra-sensory perception. After all, anything which is verifiable in her communications must from the nature of the case be concerned with facts about *this* world. The ostensible communicator may also tell us about the kind of life he claims to be living in the next world and what sort of a world it is. Indeed, we are told a good deal on this subject in some mediumistic communications, both in spoken communications and in automatic scripts. But surely it is obvious that we have no way of 'checking' communications of this other-worldly kind? We can neither verify them nor falsify them. Therefore (it is argued) we must just disregard them altogether, on the ground that they are 'non-evidential'. At the most, they can only throw light on the psychology of the medium in the way that dreams and fantasies do. So we must fix our attention on the evidential communications, those which concern events in *this* world, whether past, present or future.

Since some of them are in fact verified and the information cannot have been acquired in any normal manner, we must try to explain how they come to be made. This is what the Super ESP hypothesis undertakes to do. (Some continental writers call it 'the Animistic hypothesis'. I find this terminology confusing, since the word 'Animism' also has another, quite different sense. The term has long been used to denote the belief—alleged to be held by primitive peoples—that inorganic objects, such as stones or rivers, are alive or 'have souls'.)

Indeed, the Super ESP hypothesis offers us a complete theory of mediumship, and a very plausible one. We know from other evidence (including experimental evidence) that paranormal cognitive capacities—telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and retrocognition—do exist in a number of human beings. All the verifiable information which a medium gives us,

about the earthly life of a particular deceased person, and also sometimes about the affairs of his still-living relatives, including things which are going to happen to them in the future—all this information might conceivably have been acquired by means of the ESP powers of the medium herself. Let us assume that it *was* acquired in that way, at an unconscious level of the medium's mind. The only other assumption we need is that the information acquired is then (as it were) 'worked up' by a process of unconscious imaginative dramatisation, and is presented to the sitters in the form of a more or less plausible impersonation of the deceased relative or friend about whom they are enquiring.

But indeed it is not just an assumption that the human mind has these powers of imaginative dramatisation. We may have to suppose that mediums are more gifted in this respect than most of us. But such powers of imaginative dramatisation are shown in all of us when we are dreaming (also, to a lesser extent, in our waking fantasies).

I think we do not sufficiently consider what an extraordinary phenomenon dreaming is. Even the most commonplace and matter-of-fact person shows an astonishing power of imaginative dramatisation in his dreams. And it seems to me that there really is a close analogy between mediumistic phenomena and dreaming. The medium is as it were 'dreaming aloud' when she utters her communications. We must remember in this connection that spontaneous cases of telepathy occur sometimes in dreams. Indeed, the telepathic dream is perhaps the best known of all types of paranormal phenomena. Dreams are sometimes precognitive too.

If the paranormal cognitive powers of the medium are extensive and her powers of imaginative dramatisation are sufficiently great, there is no reason why she should not present to us a quite recognisable 'impersonation' of a particular deceased person whom we knew. We can do this for ourselves when we dream about him. But we get the materials for our imaginative construct from our own memories, whereas she gets them by means of her ESP powers.

PSEUDO-COMMUNICATORS

The Super ESP hypothesis is also able to explain an awkward fact which I have not hitherto mentioned. There are cases of pseudo-communicators. The most famous example is a purely fictitious character who called himself 'John Ferguson' and purported to give communications about his earthly life. The sitter was the well-known psychical researcher Dr S. G. Soal.

Moreover there is another case, also reported by Dr Soal, which is even more peculiar. A man called Gordon Davis had been a friend of Dr Soal's in his youth and Soal believed him to be dead, having heard that he was killed in the first world-war. At a sitting in 1922, Gordon Davis was the

communicator. He gave a number of correct details about his schooldays and also about the period when he and Soal had been cadets in the army. Moreover, he spoke with a voice and accent resembling Davis's (it was what is called a 'direct-voice' seance). But it turned out later that Gordon Davis was still alive and was practising as an estate agent in Southend. At the time of the sitting he was interviewing a client.

A believer in the Survival Hypothesis might point out that there are *apparitions* of the living as well as of the dead. But if this analogy is valid, one would expect that mediumistic communications from the living would be more frequent than they are. There are a good many cases of apparitions of the living; but the Gordon Davis case is almost if not quite unique.

You will remember that at an earlier stage of the discussion I distinguished between 'controls' and 'communicators'; and I suggested, in agreement with the majority of psychical researchers, that the control is not a discarnate entity (though it usually claims to be) but is a secondary personality of the medium herself. Its habitat, so to speak, is not the next world, but some unconscious stratum of the medium's own mind. But according to the Super ESP hypothesis, communicators have much the same status as controls have. Both alike are imaginative constructs. The difference between them, according to the super ESP hypothesis, is only this:—the materials out of which a communicator is constructed get *into* the medium's unconscious in a telepathic or clairvoyant or precognitive manner; whereas the materials out of which a control is constructed are just repressed and perhaps childish wishes, memories and thoughts of her own.

This is the one point on which the Super ESP theory of mediumship agrees with the Spiritualist theory. For the Spiritualists too assign the same status to the control and the communicators: they hold that both alike are discarnate spirits. It is a curious meeting of extremes.

SUPER-ESP VERSUS SURVIVAL

How are we to decide between the Super ESP hypothesis and the survival hypothesis? *Is* there any way of deciding between them? Well, we can say this at any rate. If we accept the Super ESP hypothesis we do have to suppose that some living human beings have ESP powers of almost unlimited scope—telepathic, clairvoyant, precognitive and retrocognitive capacities much greater than our *other* evidence about those capacities would suggest.

Let us consider a sitting at which information is requested concerning a particular deceased person Mr A. And let us suppose that it is a proxy sitting: that is, no person who is present at the sitting is a relation or friend or even acquaintance of the late Mr A. All the medium is told is Mr A's name, and the date and possibly also the place of his death.

No doubt there are living human beings who know a number of facts about the earthly career of the late Mr A. There may also be *documentary* evidence of various kinds about him (for example letters which he wrote when alive, obituary notices about him in newspapers). But how does the medium—or her unconscious—manage to get in touch with just these people among all the millions of living human beings that there are? Or if she is to exercise her clairvoyant powers upon those letters or other documents, how is she to *select* them from among the tons and tons of written material which exist? Does she, so to speak, follow a telepathic link from the sitter, who is just a proxy, to the absent friends or relatives of the late Mr A, and then proceed to ‘tap’ those memories of this deceased person, and also perhaps their memories concerning the whereabouts of documents written by him or about him? I do not think we have much other evidence to suggest that this sort of thing can be done even by very gifted ESP subjects; and it will of course have to be done unconsciously if the Super ESP hypothesis is correct.

COSMIC MEMORY

Similar difficulties arise if we try to bolster up the Super ESP hypothesis by postulating a ‘cosmic memory’ in which every event (or every human event) which ever happens is somehow retained: something like the ‘Great Book’ which we are told of in traditional descriptions of the Day of Judgement. (You will recall the splendid stanzas about it in the hymn *Dies Irae*.) For here too the medium suffers from a kind of *embarras de richesse*. The Great Book may, somehow, be available to her, but how is she to find the right page and the right paragraph? It is a very voluminous work indeed!

Moreover, much of what is said about imaginative dramatisation in the Super ESP hypothesis could quite well be accepted by a believer in the Survival Hypothesis. On either of these two hypotheses, we can admit that information acquired in a telepathic manner, at some unconscious level of the medium’s mind, *presents* itself in a dramatised form in her utterances. Her remarks ‘he is telling me this’ ‘he is showing me that’ need not be taken to mean that ‘he’ is literally there beside her. She may indeed have interior mental images—visual images—which make it natural for her to speak in this way. But we may quite well suppose (as I have suggested already) that she is dreaming aloud, as it were—experiencing something like a dream and describing it while she has it.

The important question is, where do the *materials* of this dream come from, since in the course of her dreaming aloud she manages to give correct information which she could not have acquired in any normal manner. If she got them by telepathy, who was the telepathic agent? In the Gordon Davis case he turned out to be a living and physically-embodied human being. When the communicator is wholly fictitious, as in the John Ferguson

case, the telepathic agent was presumably the sitter, Dr Soal. It is not at all uncommon for a medium to 'pick up' thoughts from the minds of the sitters.

Or if the word 'agent' is misleading (because it may suggest that telepathy is a more conscious and more voluntary process than it actually is) let us ask, who or what was the source of this telepathically-acquired information? Once the medium has got the information, she herself (or her unconscious) may proceed to use it as material for a piece of elaborate imaginative dramatisation. But where did she get the information from? This question still remains on our hands, even though we accept all that has been suggested concerning the part which imaginative dramatisation plays in mediumship. And it seems to me that in some cases (the Edgar Vandy case, for instance) much the simplest answer is that she gets the information from the surviving mind of some physically-deceased person, and that some part, at least, of his personality does continue to exist after his physical organism is dead.

The communicator, as he presents himself to us through the medium's utterances, might still be wholly or partly a 'construct' produced by the medium's own mind. And yet telepathy from a discarnate source might provide some, or much, or even most of the materials out of which this imaginative construct is built up. Professor Hornell Hart has used the analogy of a historical novel to illustrate this idea. A historical novel is a product of imaginative dramatisation (and much of the work of composing it may well be done at an unconscious level of the writer's mind). Yet quite a lot of perfectly good historical fact enters into this imaginative construct. Some of the characters in the book are wholly fictitious. But others are not. They really existed and really did, or said, or suffered the things the novelist describes. And some parts of the story are betwixt and between. For instance in Scott's picture of King James I in *The Fortunes of Nigel* there is much genuine historical material; but some of the incidents and most of the conversations were the product of the writer's own imaginative powers.

SURVIVAL OF MEMORIES ONLY?

But even though we do think that the Survival hypothesis is the simplest explanation of some mediumistic communications, what kind of survival do they point to? Is it personal survival? Or does the evidence only suggest that some or many of the late Mr A's memories continue to exist after his physical organism had died? In that case, what survives would be something less than a person. It was said of the Bourbons that they had 'learned nothing and forgotten nothing' during their period of exile after the French Revolution. If this had been a complete description of their mental life in that period, they must have ceased to be *persons* for 24 years or so, and only began to be persons again when they returned to France in 1814. (This may suggest a rather repulsive version of the Reincarnation theory, which

I leave you to work out for yourselves.) For genuinely personal survival, we need evidence of something more than mere survival of memories. We need evidence of continuing mental activity of a purposive kind.

Do we get it? On the face of it, we sometimes do. In the Edgar Vandy case already quoted, it looks as if the communicator was trying to produce evidence which would identify him. Moreover (and more important perhaps) it looks as if he was trying to prevent his relatives from finding out just why he was not rescued, and trying—successfully—to shield or protect the person responsible. As you will remember, he was represented as saying ‘He does not want you to enquire too closely into the causes of his death’.

I will now mention another case, a non-mediumistic one, which seems to show evidence of purpose. It is the Chaffin Will case. Mr Chaffin, a farmer in North Carolina, died in 1921. He left a will, dated 1905, in which the whole of his property was left to one of his four sons, Marshall Chaffin. Some four years later another son, James, began to have vivid dreams in which his father appeared at his bedside and spoke to him. In one of these (it is not quite clear whether it was a dream or a half-waking vision) his father was dressed in an old black overcoat and said ‘You will find my will in my overcoat pocket’. James found the overcoat and looked inside the pocket which had been sewn up. Inside was a piece of paper on which was written ‘Read the 27th chapter of *Genesis* in my daddie’s old bible’. (This is the chapter describing how Jacob supplanted Esau.) James found the old bible in a drawer and between the pages containing *Genesis* ch. 27 there was another will dated 1919, 14 years later than the first one. In this the testator said that after reading *Genesis* ch. 27, he wished his property to be divided equally between his four sons. This will, though unattested by witnesses, was valid by the laws of North Carolina, and its provisions were accordingly carried out. Here we do seem to have evidence of *post mortem* purposive activity.

THE CROSS-CORRESPONDENCES

Moreover, we sometimes seem to have evidence of something more, not only purpose but also of a quite elaborate intelligent design. The best-known examples of this are the Cross Correspondence cases investigated by the Society for Psychical Research in the first quarter of this century. The story is exceedingly complicated. You will find an excellent presentation of it in Mr W. H. Salter’s book *Zoar*, pp. 169–208. I shall just give you a very brief sketch of the kind of thing which happened. Most of the material came in the form of automatic writing. A number of automatic writers began to produce scripts independently of each other. The scripts contained many rather recondite literary allusions, mostly to the Greek and Latin classics; and when any one script was read by itself, it was impossible to see

what the point of the allusions was. But when several scripts were considered together, it was found that those cryptic allusions made sense. What automatist A had written referred to something which automatist B had written independently. Sometimes *directions* were actually given in the script of one automatist A, telling her to send her script to another automatist B, someone she had never met.

It does look as if there were evidence of *post mortem* design here (a very ingenious design too) and it was eventually claimed in the scripts themselves that the author of the design was Frederick Myers, who had died shortly before the Cross-Correspondences began and was himself a very accomplished classical scholar. If we reject this explanation, we shall have to suppose that a great deal of elaborate and ingenious planning went on in the mind of one of the automatists, though none of them had any conscious awareness of any such planning. There must have been a great deal of unconscious telepathy too, whereby the arch-planner revealed little bits of the plan (but not too much) to each of the other participants.

Here we have another illustration of a point which I tried to make earlier. One may put it like this:—the more you *deflate* the survival hypothesis, the more you have to *inflate* the powers of the human unconscious—the unconscious stratum or level of the minds of physically-embodied human beings. We have already seen how much they have to be inflated in the Super ESP hypothesis. And we have to inflate them still more when we consider the special sort of evidence presented to us in the Cross-Correspondence cases.

COMMUNICATIONS DESCRIBING 'OTHER WORLDS'

Finally, there is one other point which has to be considered if we are inclined to think that the mediumistic evidence for survival will only establish (at the most) the survival of a set of memories, something much less than the survival of a complete personality.

There are mediumistic communications which purport to describe 'the other world' and the kind of life which the communicator is living in his *post mortem* condition. As I have said already, some psychical researchers maintain that communications of this purely descriptive kind should be ignored altogether, on the ground that they are 'non-evidential'. It is of course true that we have no way of verifying them or falsifying them; and it is not much good to reply 'just wait till you are dead, and then you will be able to see for yourself whether they are correct or not', since this obviously begs the question in favour of the Survival Hypothesis. All the same, this recommendation, that communications of this other-world-describing kind should just be ignored altogether, seems to me altogether *too* positivistic and puritanical.

May I remind you of my point about the Bourbons, who were said to have learned nothing and forgotten nothing? These so-called non-evidential communications do suggest that the communicators *have* learned something since they died. We 'live and learn'. Or rather we do not live in a personal way unless we continue to have experiences—new experiences, and not just memories of old ones. Let me put it this way: if the Survival Hypothesis is true, there *ought* to be communications of this purely descriptive kind, describing 'other worlds' and the kind of life which is alleged to be lived in them. And if such descriptive communications never occurred, that would be a very serious objection to the Survival Hypothesis. In fact, however, communications of this other-world-describing kind are very abundant, almost embarrassingly so. Some of these descriptions (not all of them) are tolerably clear and coherent and have at any rate the kind of interest which traveller's tales have. My own knowledge of this kind of mediumistic literature is pretty slight and superficial. All the same I wish I had time to say a little about it, because these other-world-describing communications do raise theological problems. Some of them are very repugnant to religious people (and not without reason). I am afraid there are the beginnings of a kind of conflict between psychical research and religion here; and this distresses me, because I happen to have a foot in both camps.

CONCLUSION

Obviously I have not time to discuss these other-world-descriptions now (I will try to say something about them in the discussion afterwards, if any of you are interested). But now I must try to sum up the main argument of this lecture.

My aim was to show that some mediumistic communications do provide us with *evidence* for the continued existence of human personality after death. I am very far from claiming that this evidence is conclusive. But I think it is strong enough to justify the following piece of advice: 'Do not be too sure that you will *not* continue to exist as a person after your physical organism has died'. And even though we cannot go farther than that, the investigation of mental mediumship has taught us something which is quite important.